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# BACK TO BETHEL

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# BACK TO BETHEL

Separation from Sin, and Fellowship with God

BY

F. B. MEYER, B.A.

AUTHOR OF

"OLD TESTAMENT HEROES," "MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE," ETC.

Fleming H. Revell Company

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## ARISE, GO UP TO BETHEL.

You will find the verses from which I am to speak in Gen. 35: 1:

"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make thee an altar unto God. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods from among you, and be clean."

Bethel is not more than ten or fifteen hundred feet above the sea, a waste moorland, as we should say in our country, strewn with great boulders. The name means the House of God. How did it get that name?

Thirty years before the words of my text were spoken, Jacob, fleeing from his father's house to avoid the anger of Esau, came there on the first night of his absence from home. You must think of him as a pilgrim exile, with his staff in hand, no escort, nothing of household gear, coming upon that moorland, making what bed he could upon the heather, and lying down to sleep, with the stars above him and the wild wind beating across the waste. His last vision was of those stones that lay strewn around him; and as he slept these were piled one upon the other until from his couch there arose the ladder up and down which the angels trooped, coming down to him in blessing and going up to

God in prayer. There he heard the voice of God, and as the morning broke and the vision faded and the sunshine lighted up the world, he vowed that from that moment God should be his God and he His faithful servant.

I want to carry you back to days long gone by, it may be thirty years ago, when you left your father's house in some country district as a young man or girl, and entered into some great city. Do you remember your first night there, and the tiny bedroom in which you knelt to say your evening prayer, and felt so lonesome and solitary? As you remained in the attitude of devotion it seemed as though the God of your old father and mother came very near you and spoke to your heart, and you promised from that night to be His faithful servant, so that until you died He would always find you ready to do His will. I want to know whether those vows have been kept? Has not that angel vision faded from your eyes? Has not that ladder died back into the dark? Have you not forgotten, or at least evaded, your solemn covenant?

That young woman got a situation. She soon found herself beloved by one who could make a home for her. She and he together have climbed the ladder of prosperity, and she is now at the head of a beautiful home, and the angel ladder that linked her with God has faded away. She has drifted upon the current of fashion and worldliness. She is further away from God tonight than she was that other night so long ago.

That young man has become one of your leading citizens. He is making money rapidly, but the promises have died upon his lips, and he is now further away from the God of his father than on the night he commenced his lonely pilgrimage.

I am perfectly sure that I am speaking to some Jacobs that need to have the call of God addressed to them, saying,

"Arise, go up to Bethel! Get away to the moorland plain! Get back to where you were thirty years ago, and at the foot of God's ladder of fellowship again covenant yourselves to Him, and dedicate your life to His service."

From Bethel Jacob traveled forth to Padan Aram where he met Rachel. She became his beautiful wife. He had loved her at first sight, and stayed in Padan Aram, serving seven years for Leah, seven years for Rachel and six years for his cattle and flocks. But they were like a few days for the love he had for Rachel. Years afterwards he started to return to his father's house, with a large and wealthy following. He had difficulty in getting away from Laban, and you remember how the angels of God escorted him, though he had proved himself unfit to receive their help. This man who had seen the angel vision stooped to do things while in Laban's employ which were not worthy of a son of God. Just as you who professed so much have been doing things which would not stand the scrutiny of God's angels, and of which one day you must give account at the judgment seat.

WRESTLING AT JABBOK.

However, God loved this man, and brought him down to Jabbok. I have been to Jabbok myself, not literally, but in spirit, for God cannot bear for us to live a low down life. Let us picture that scene!

The stars shining above, the brook rushing down to the Jordan, the trees and shrubs overhanging it! Rachel the beloved, Leah and the children, the flocks and herds had all gone forward, and Jacob was left alone. And the angel of God met him. (Genesis 32:24.) Too often that wonderful scene has been used as a symbol of wrestling prayer, but it is not meant to be taken only in that sense. It seems to me that it was not Jacob who wrestled with the angel, but the angel who wrestled with Jacob. It was as though God knew it was his only chance. He wanted to lift Jacob up to a new royal life, and so He actually wrestled with him as though to compel him to yield to Him. Jacob was a proud man. He stood his ground and resisted the effort of the angel to humble him. He struggled. He antagonized the angel of God's love. It was only when the angel put forth his hand and touched the sinew of his thigh, which shriveled as a cord in the flame, and the man was no longer able to resist, that he cast his arms around the angel and said:

"I yield, I yield! But I will not let thee go until thou bless me!"

The angel blessed him, and said: "What is thy name?"

He answered: "Jacob—supplanter, cheat, mean, crafty."

The angel said, "No more Jacob, but Israel! God wants you to leave all that behind and step up into a royal life."

Did you ever have that experience in your life? I had it twenty years ago, and I think many another can point back to some secret hour when God's angel came to lift him back into princeliness, and make him the servant of God. Perhaps when your wife lay at the point of death the angel came, and you vowed if God would spare her to you you would live a worthy, godly life. You remember, woman, that time when your first babe was dangerously ill. You sat at the bedside and lifted up your heart to God and said: "If thou wilt spare my child I will renounce my worldliness, my low living, and I will live a true Christian life." That was your Jabbok, and you left it resolved that God and you would be forever in close and blessed fellowship.

But what happened the next day?

It seems too awful to tell, because it is so true not only of Jacob but of ourselves. Esau met him, and instead of trusting God, Jacob gave him a lame excuse why he could not go with him (Genesis 33:13). As soon as Esau's back was turned the crafty Jacob turned in the opposite direction and made for a fat valley and land of pasture where his cattle and sheep could get all they needed, whilst his sons and himself could do a big trade with the men of Shechem. We are told he pitched his tent toward Shechem, and worse than that, he bought a

parcel of a field. He who had come of a pilgrim race, who ought to have trusted God and known that God would give him the whole land, became a freeholder and bought some real estate right over against Shechem, one of the worst cities of the country. For wealth and gain he threw himself and his wife and children into the closest possible contact with this city, and you will hear presently what came of it.

### RACHEL'S INFLUENCE.

I always think that just here Rachel's influence came in. I am not going to absolve man and say that he does not care for the world, but I am quite sure women often drive their husbands into expenditures which they cannot afford, because they say:

"We want to give our children a chance."

I always feel that Rachel's influence there was baleful upon Jacob's soul, and that she probably said:

"Husband, don't you think we ought to give our children some of the polish, some of the manners of our time? Don't you think it would be wise for them to come into contact with other people?"

Don't think that I am too hard on Rachel. Her own behavior is my justification. We know that when Laban came to Jacob and said somebody had stolen his household gods Jacob knew nothing about it, but as a matter of fact, Rachel had stolen them and hidden them with their goods. Rachel no doubt knew of God, yet she had these little gods

to which she gave her worship; and I cannot but feel that her influence was affected by the idolatry she was practising.

I want to speak for a moment to women. I want to ask whether in God's sight they are using for God that holy, religious influence which should pervade the home and mold the husband and the children. I want to ask girls to begin their relations with men upon such a basis that their influence over them may always be for good. If only girls would build up sweet and noble lives and refuse to do things which God would not approve, they would surely have an influence over their brothers and future husbands in all after time. Pledge yourself to God in all purity and chastity. Build up in good works a life so full of the jewelry of heaven that men will be compelled to seek you for your intrinsic worth. If any woman has idols—the idol of morphine, of worldliness or any other idol—in God's name put it away! Can you allow filthy novels to eat out the very core of your heart and blast the purity and virtue which are your chief graces? In the name of God, I ask you, whatever secret idols you are worshiping, that you tear them from their throne and open your heart to Jesus Christ, so that you may have no influence for evil, but every influence for good.

Rachel ought to have been Jacob's good angel. She should have said:

"Husband, don't go there! Remember the children!"

But they drifted together, and for four or five

years they lived near that prosperous, idolatrous city.

And what happened next?

We are told in Genesis 34 that Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, went out to see the daughters of the land. Poor child! She had been put in the way of temptation, and like a gnat she began to flit around the candle flame. It may be that home was irksome, it may be there was quarreling there among her brothers, it may be that she lacked tenderness and sweetness from those who lived with her. So she took a step from which there was no stepping back. She lost her honor, and ultimately brought disgrace and shame upon her father's home.

Who was to blame for all that? Was not Jacob to blame for putting his children in that position?

Listen, you men who are making money! There is a tendency on the part of the Christian man, when he begins to make money, to say: "I can now live in a larger house. I can go into better society." Too often acting thus, you place your children under that influence which is to them what Shechem was to Jacob. What is the result? Your children at once begin to get worldly notions. They go into balls and dances and theaters. You expose your sons and daughters to companions who will lead them to perdition. I don't say you ought to deny your children education or anything which makes life bright and happy for them, but I do say when you have given your family a house according to your means and provided for the education

and pleasure and recreation of your children, you ought to look upon the increase of your prosperity as a talent from God. You should use anything that is over and above what is necessary for you and your family for the service of God, accounting yourself His steward and entrusted with His goods.

Six, seven years passed like that, and culminated in a tragedy that compelled Jacob to be gone. Oh, that I were eloquent! Oh, that I could paint for you where you are living! Oh, that I could compare the angel-haunted ladder of Bethel with Shechem! If I could make you see that contrast, you would not need an angel voice to say to you: "Arise, go back to Bethel," but, making all haste, you would get back to the glorious heights where God meets the soul.

### BACK TO BETHEL.

When God spoke to Jacob he turned to his household and all that were with him, and said:

"Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise and go up to Bethel."

I would touch the harp of memory, the memory of those past days when you were near God. Won't you return to Bethel, where the angels go and come?

I remember once going to a meeting of the Salvation Army where they had advertised an exhibition of idols. I expected to see idols from India

and Africa and the South Seas, but instead of that eight young men, at the appointed time, stepped to the rear of the platform and returned, each bearing a large piece of cardboard. One card was covered with pipes and cigars and tobacco; another with sham jewelry, feathers, ribbons and things of that sort. There were eight cards, each covered with things that had been idols to some.

A man sitting behind me pointed and said: "That was my pipe."

A woman said: "See my bow of ribbon?"

Those simple people felt that these things had become idols to them, and they had given them up.

I am not here to say that tobacco or jewelry is your idol, because if I did, a great many who are not tempted in these directions would say, "He doesn't mean me; I have no idol"; which would not be true. For a good many men the idol is money; for many women it is their beauty, or their skill in music, or perhaps their beautiful homes. You may depend upon it that unless you have gone through the purging process everyone of you is tempted to have some secret throne upon which is your idol. The Greek word for "idol" means "appearance." It is something which you trust in more than God whom you cannot see. If there is anything of that sort in your life, I pray you put it away!

But you ask, "How can you put these things away?"

There is only one way. Take them as God's gift. As soon as you begin to look upon them as

His loan, the fear of their hurting you passes away, if they are legitimate. Test yourself and say:

"Christ, from henceforth I treat this as Thy gift to me, to be used for Thee!"

And, my friends, be clean! Clean in your heart, clean in what you see, clean in every word you speak, clean in every act, clean in the whole body! Never allow an expression which is capable of a double meaning. Never let a thought intrude which is not just what it should be. Don't look at those unclean pictures. Don't read those unclean books.

"Change your garments!" It may be you have dressed in polluted garments. I say to you, put off the old man and put on Jesus Christ, and say:

"I am going to live henceforth as Jesus Christ would live were He in my place."

Jacob did it, and he went back to Bethel, and a wonderful thing happened. God said to him: "Your name shall no more be Jacob, but Israel." Then He added, "I am God Almighty"—as much as to say, "Jacob, you sought Shechem because you thought you would do better, and now you stand alone and wonder what is going to happen next. I am going to be with you. I am God Almighty. I will meet all demands. I will stand sponsor for you. Reckon on me. I will see you through."

Now look to Jesus! Open your heart to Him. Give Him your whole nature. Don't let there be any secrets. He will give you a new name. He will be to you God Almighty. He will make you fruitful and will multiply you. And may you and He live together in blessed fellowship until He makes up His jewels.

## THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN.

2 Chronicles 29:27.

Abounding joy is the prime characteristic of our holy religion—joy unspeakable and full of glory. This is as natural to true religion as the bloom on a maiden's face is to perfect health. You can't create joy, but you can make the conditions from which it springs.

If your life is joyless, it must be because of some sin. Find out, then, the reason why your harp hangs on the willow, and joy has died out of your life. Our Lord said: "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). If your joy is not full you have not entered into the heart of our Lord's sermon about the vine and the branches.

Paul said: "The fruit of the Spirit is joy" (Galatians 5:22). Now, fruit is natural. There is no effort about fruit. Indeed the effort of the bough is to repress the fruit which presses forward into expression, so that gardeners have to prune away excessive production. If the bough is properly connected to the trunk, it bears fruit; and if you are properly related to our Lord, joy will be as natural to you as singing to a bird.

Is your religion somber and dour? Is there no spring and elasticity about it? Do children find you out or shun you? When you enter society, does the laughter and merriment die? Are you an element of perfect gladness at a party? If not, there is something wrong in your inner life, which is choking the spring of joy.

Some years ago my friend Dr. Handley Moule visited the excavations in the Forum at Rome. While there, as the rubbish was being cleared away, suddenly there gushed forth the waters of a spring that had been choked for centuries. Poor little spring! Longing to express itself and flash in the sunlight, but choked by the accumulations of the years!

So, if you are a Christian at all, there is a spring of joy in your soul which has been stopped and silenced. My first mission is to put my hand on what is wrong.

In order to help me lay hold of your conscience, turn to 2 Chronicles 29:27, where we are told:

"When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also."

The word "began" indicates that it had ceased. If you look into the preceding chapter you will find that for sixteen years the song of the Lord had never broken from Levite throats, had never floated through the temple courts. Those courts, intended by David to resound with the praises and worship of God, were still. In this they re-

sembled your heart, for your heart was meant for music. If it has ceased, it is probably from the same reason.

### THE CAUSE OF THE SILENCE.

What had happened during those sixteen years?

Turn to the twenty-eighth chapter, verses 24 and 25. "Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Jerusalem he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers."

King Ahaz was weary of the worship of God. So he put out the lights, he closed the doors, he took away the keys, he turned the Levites adrift. The sparrows made their homes, the birds of the air built their nests in the neglected courts of the temple. Neither Ahaz, nor the priests, nor the Levites frequented the holy place.

Then came a change. The burnt offering began after sixteen years of discontinuance, and the song of the Lord broke into utterance once again. Hezekiah became king, and "in the first month of his reign he opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry

forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (verses 3-5).

"Carry forth the filthiness," that is what must first be done. It is the call of the apostle Paul: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," (2 Cor. 7:1). I have yet to learn what the apostle quite meant by the distinction between filthiness of the *flesh* and of the *spirit.* Away back in the inner shrine of our spirit there must be filthiness.

The priests and the Levites gathered at Hezekiah's call. They "went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found," (verse 16).

What followed? They made a sin offering; and so sin was put away (verse 24).

### OUR CHURCHES.

Let us apply these truths first to our churches.

You are eagerly desirous of a revival of undefiled religion, that your hearts and homes should be full of praise to God. I call on the elders and deacons and leaders in our churches to come into the inner courts that they may be thoroughly cleansed from the filthiness that has accumulated there. Nobody brought it into the temple—it just accumulated. And the dust and filthiness of the world has accumulated in our souls, and you and I must deal with it.

Some years ago I met a gray-haired minister who told me the following story from his own life. Said he:

"I was brought up under Finney, and after my seminary course was sent to carry on a decayed work in a distant country district. There had been no revival, no stirring up of the Holy Ghost in those parts for years. I gathered some godly people in the vestry every Friday night to pray for a revival. We kept this up for fifteen months, but the heavens were as brass above us.

"When fall came on, I set apart a day for united prayer. My heart rejoiced as I saw the farmers driving in with their families, until the schoolhouse behind the chapel was filled.

"I explained that we had gathered to pray for a revival. After the opening hymns and prayers the meeting was thrown open.

"The silence of death settled upon the audience. Every one waited.

"Presently a leading old elder rose in a front seat, and said:

" 'Pastor, I don't think there is going to be a revival of the Holy Ghost here so long as Brother Jones and I don't speak to each other.'

"He left his pew, walked down the aisle and found Brother Jones, and said:

" 'Brother Jones, you and I have not spoken for five years. Let's bury the hatchet. Here's my hand!'

"The old man returned to his pew, and sat down. A sob broke from the audience, and then there was silence again.

"Soon another elder rose, and said:

" 'Pastor, I think there will be no revival here

while I say fair things to your face and mean things behind your back. I want you to forgive me.'

"We shook hands, and the audience relapsed into stillness again."

The minister told me that he then witnessed the strangest scene of his life. For ten minutes men and women crept noiselessly about the house, squaring old scores. And God began to visit them.

The operatives in a factory nearby heard what was going on in the school-house, and at the lunch hour they came over in such numbers that they were diverted into the church. The pastor preached to them the simple gospel, and within five minutes four of the ringleaders in sin in that community were crying to God for mercy. A revival broke out that swept to and fro over the district for three years.

I told this story at Wandsworth, England, once. A few weeks later, when addressing a gathering of ministers in London, I told it again, and a brother minister rose and said that after I had preached at Wandsworth, as he was going out, a man who owed him twenty-five dollars took his hand, and said:

"Forgive my delay in settling that debt. You shall have the money tomorrow."

We must get back to first principles. We are right with God in the exact proportion that we are right with the men and women around us. Let us test ourselves, not by what we are on Sundays at church, but by what we are to the man whom we like least. That is the true gauge.

Is there any unkind, jealous feeling between

pastor and pastor? any irritation or fretting because of another's success?

Are you Christian people prepared to square up old scores? to give up things in business that you know are not perfectly consistent with Christ's commands?

If so, shake hands; write that letter; pay that money; have done with that source of irritation. Let the love of God be poured into your soul, and after that joy will come.

### THE INDIVIDUAL HEART.

Let us now come to your own heart. Is any secret sin harbored there? Joy began in my life one solemn night when I knelt before Christ and had the holy light of His Spirit turned upon one thing in my heart that was filthy. It had accumulated there, and I hardly knew it. I had been living a very unsettled life for some time, when a young fellow came and spoke in my church, and led me to feel that he possessed a secret which I had not myself. The following morning, at 7 o'clock, I found my way to the house where he was staying. I knew the house very well, and went up to the room which he was occupying. I said:

"You will excuse my coming, won't you? The fact is, I am very unhappy. I am a Christian minister, and people expect a great deal of me, but my heart is full of evil, and I cannot deal with it. Can you give me your secret?"

I could see by the candles that he had been up a long time, and in fact he told me he had been up

since 4 o'clock. I asked him what he had been doing, and he said that the Lord had said, "If ye love Me keep My commandments," and, said he:

"I was just going over the commandments to see if I have kept them."

I told him I wanted to learn his secret, and he said:

"There is nothing I have which you may not have."

"But how may I get right? I am a Christian, but how may I get entirely right?"

"Have you ever given yourself entirely to Christ?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "in a general way I have."

"If you have not done so entirely, go alone and settle it."

That night I knelt by my bed, with the door of my room locked, and resolved that I would not sleep until I had settled the matter and surrendered everything to Jesus. It seemed as though Jesus was by my side, and as if I took from my pocket a large bunch of keys which I generally carry when I am at home. I took from that bunch one tiny key, which I kept, and then held to Jesus the bunch with the one missing, and said to Him:

"Here are the keys of my life."

He looked at me sadly, and asked:

"Are all there?"

"All but one tiny one, to a small cupboard. It is so small that it cannot amount to anything."

He replied, "Child, if you cannot trust Me with everything, you cannot trust Me with anything."

Satan whispered to me: "You cannot give up that thing. Besides if you let Christ have His way, you don't know what He will ask of you next. Don't give it to Him!"

Then the thought came to me of my only child, who at that time was somewhat wayward. Supposing she were to come to me and say: "Father, I give my whole life up to you; you may choose anything you want for me," I knew I would not call her mother and say: "Now is our chance. What can we do to make her life miserable and unhappy?" I would say:

"Wife, here is our chance. We will take away everything that hurts her, and we will make her life one long summer day."

Christ would not be harder on me than on my child, and at last I said:

"Lord, I cannot give the key, but I am willing to have you come and take it."

It was as I expected. I seemed to hold out my hand, and He came and opened the fingers and took the key from me. Then He went straight to that cupboard, unlocked and opened it, and saw there a thing that was terrible and hideous. He said:

"This must go out. You must never go this way again."

And the moment He took the thing from me, He took the desire for it out of my soul, and I began to hate it. Then I yielded myself absolutely to Him, and said:

"From this night I want Thee to do as Thou wilt with my life."

The next morning I wakened expecting a sort of hallelujah feeling, but I was as calm and quiet as I am now. I only had a delightful sense that I did belong to Jesus Christ, and a hundred times that day I said to myself:

"I am His! I am absolutely His!"

Have you some hidden cupboard in your soul in which you are harboring things whose miasma is killing your joy? Face your true condition. Too often we are like those who fear their lungs are diseased, and who dread examination by the stethoscope and surgeon lest he should reveal the true condition. We can make no headway until we are clean. Are you sure there is nothing in your heart you would not like Christ to deal with? Before you can have God's best, you must let Him search your soul, and show what the unclean thing is which entered years ago and has choked your spiritual vitality ever since.

### THE SONG BEGAN.

Now notice what happened next. Hezekiah had the altar ready. On one side were the priests with the whole burnt offering, which signified Christ's entire consecration to God in His death, and also the entire consecration of believers to Christ in life. On the other side was the Levite choir in white vesture, and other Levites with cymbals and psalteries and harps. At a given signal the burnt offering was laid on the altar. I know not whether God sent fire from heaven, or the wood was ignited with sacred fire that had somehow been kept burning all those years. But as the fire began the sweet

voices of the choristers burst forth in song, and the music of the instruments was heard again.

The very heavens must have stood still to listen. Angels must have come in troops to hear the music in that familiar place after sixteen years of silence.

I found myself a few months ago in a bachelor's house. Bachelors are often taciturn, gloomy, and wrapped up in themselves; but this one lived in a beautiful house, and was one of the brightest men I ever met.

When supper was finished, I said:

"You seem very happy?"

"Yes," he replied, "I'll tell you my story. Years ago I was making money, and chose this solitary life so as to be free from the anxieties of wife and children. But though I had all that the world could give, I was not happy.

"Then my brother died. He had no genius for business, and was always poor. He left a large family of children. I tried to provide for them, but finally had to import them all into this house. I thought the peace of my life had then gone out.

"For the first week it was agony to see those children run all over the house. But then they got hold of me, and I began to like them. I sent them to school, and have been both father and mother to them. Two of them are now married. I don't believe there is a happier man on God's earth than myself."

When the burnt offering began, the song began. A self-centered life is a miserable life. When that man began to sacrifice himself, happiness came into his life.

And if, to live for another is sweet, if it is lovely for a woman to live for a paralyzed husband, and if there is a song forever on her lips because she is all in all to him, what must it be when you are all in all for Jesus? Wherefore I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice—not a *dead,* but a *living* sacrifice—holy, acceptable unto God; and be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

How I fought God's will! I thought it was hard, inexorable, terrible; but when a man presents himself to it, he finds it good, acceptable and perfect. The thing you hate becomes your joy. As you look into Christ's face, and say, "Rabboni—Master," easter joy springs in your soul.

God help you to clear away all the filthiness, and yield yourself to Him. Whether you can sing or not with the voice, the song of the Lord will begin in your soul!

## HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.

Holiness stands for three things. First, *separation from sin and common use,* as the one day among the days of the week, as the one mountain amidst the mountains of the world, and as the child Samuel amidst the boys and girls of his age—separate from sin and common use.

Second, it means to be *separated unto the service of God.* That which is kept from sin is reserved for God's most holy use, and that which is taken from common service is reserved utterly and absolutely for Him. Just as you would not permit the chalice and platten which are used for the communion service to be employed for the common meals of your own home, so that which is holy is reserved and set apart for sacred use.

Third, while holiness means separation from and separation to, it also implies *Godlikeness,* because that which is reserved for God's use takes on something of God's nature. Just as the silver plate at the Lord's table reflects the light of the face of him who bears it, so that which is used by God tends to become like God. Never forget that holiness is not an *attainment,* but an *attitude.* It is the opening of the heart to the balmy air and sun-

light of God's nature, which, entering in, fill the spirit of man or woman.

### THE HIGH PRIEST'S FRONTLET.

In Exodus 28:36, the high priest stands before you vested in his full white robes, with breastplate of gold. On the frontlet of his forehead, the legend HOLINESS TO THE LORD is inscribed, so that wherever he goes to and fro, he bears upon his brow that sacred text.

Suppose I should turn from him, and speaking to you say that I want from this evening until you meet Christ in glory that you should bear that frontlet upon your brow and have that holy legend inscribed upon you, it might be you would shrink back and say:

"No, no, I will never be a hypocrite. I do trust in Christ and desire to be like Him. But I dare not arrogate to myself that sacred frontlet, that holy legend. I am not HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

Then, my friend, you are putting away from you the privilege of this dispensation, of which Zechariah says that in this age there shall be so much Holy Spirit given to the men and women who believe in Christ that HOLINESS TO THE LORD shall be engraved upon their heads, that the common vessels in their homes shall have the same legend upon them, and be as holy as the vessels in the Lord's house:

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the

pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."—Zechariah 14:20.

I remember so well spending some winter days in the city of Boston. I shall never forget the blue sky and the crisp white snow, the absence of the rumbling of wheels, and everywhere the sweet music of the sleigh bells. The bells of all our life, the dinner bell, the rising bell, the bell summoning us to our daily work, the telephone bell asking us to hold conversation with another—all the bells ringing in our lives are to have these words inscribed, so that our whole life shall have this as its keynote.

What I am going to say can be very well noted under three words—abolition, inclusion and elevation.

FIRST—ABOLITION.

I think Zechariah meant that in the age of the Holy Ghost in which we are living, there should be the abolition of the line between secular and sacred. So many people draw a line between these two. They say "business is business, and religion is religion," "a place for everything, and everything in its place." They live in two houses. Over their homes perhaps may be the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD, but they spend most of their time away from their homes, and they would hesitate to write those words over their pleasure resorts and places of business. Some people put on their religion and put it off with their Sunday clothes. They wear it with difficulty. Oh, this terrible, terrible habit of Christian people in drawing such

straight lines of demarcation, living in water-tight compartments so that one is wholly religious and the other wholly secular.

That cannot be right because of three things:

First, *Christianity is not a creed, not a formula, not a ritual, but a life.*

If it is a life begun by the Holy Spirit, a real life, the germ of the Christ life planted in our spirits and to rise up in the majesty of Christ's likeness, you cannot divest that life from ordinary existence. A flower's life must always express itself in its fragrance and hue. A bird's life must always express itself through its song, its nest building and its care for its young. An artist must always look at things artistically. And if a man is truly enjoying the life of God in his soul, that life must rise up in every word he speaks, in every look of his eyes, in every movement of his nature. I do not say that he will always be talking about God, but the divine life will express itself in his laughter and in every movement of his life.

Then, secondly, we must remember that *Christianity is the recognition of Christ's kingship.* That is, the true Christian is the absolute property of Jesus Christ.

I shall never forget when I saw a slave for the first time. It was in a street of Tangiers, Morocco. My companion pointed to a woman advancing toward us. She was barefooted, but laden with heavy gold ornaments. He said:

"That's a slave."

For the first time I was face to face with one

who had no property in her own nature, but whose every quality was owned by her master. She was absolutely his, everything about her and every faculty she possessed. I looked up to the sky and said:

"Oh, God, I thank Thee that if she is a slave, I am one also."

My friend, have you ever looked into Christ's face, and said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve! My Master, Jesus! Everything I have and everything I may acquire are all my Master's." If so, you cannot give Him part of your life and keep back the rest. Your whole life must be under the mastership of the sweetest Master and King.

Third, *Christianity is a testimony to the world, the confession of the mastership of the Lord.*

The world seldom comes into our churches. If it does not, therefore, see you living on Christian principles in your business and pleasure and daily life, your testimony to the world is at an end. Therefore, for the world's sake, I protest against this division of the secular from the sacred. I ask that wherever we are, always and everywhere, we shall bear upon our faces and upon our bodies, upon all our pleasures and business, upon all the bells that ring in our lives, these words: "Sacred to Jesus"; that is, set apart for our blessed Master and Lord.

### INCLUSION.

If that is true of you, I want you to take a step further that is a most important one, and that is expressed by the word "Inclusion."

Horses were forbidden the ancient Jew. A horse is no more harmful than a mule. God made it a

most useful animal, but because of its association with pride and show and war, God tabooed it for the Jews. But after centuries had passed and the people had been purified, elevated and taught, God said:

"There is no reason why you should not have your horses now, but engrave upon their bells the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

The ancient hermit said he could have no wife or child. No woman's hand might be laid on his sick brow with gentle caress. No children's voices might ring in his home. He must dedicate himself to God, and deny himself the comforts of home. He put away horses.

Then came the Puritans, who said, "I must have no work of art in my home, nothing that will excite amusement." No horses, no horses.

A young man once told me that since he had become consecrated he had given up manly games and his violin. If you cannot continue in such things because of evil associations, then give them up, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because of the associations. But if you can go into them and elevate your companions, if you can make them pay the price of your companionship—no swearing, no dirty talk, no gambling, do you not think it is a greater thing to join them, and as a grain of salt, as a beam of light, lift the whole of their conversation? Is not that what Zechariah meant when he said:

"You may have your horses, but see to it that

you engrave upon their bells, HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

A young girl who wishes to consecrate her life to God, thinks she must give up her piano. But suppose she can use it to keep a brother at home nights instead of wandering off to his evil companions, isn't that a higher use to put it to than to give it up absolutely?

Keep the horses if you can, but write upon them HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

But someone says, "Stop, sir. Don't you think you are introducing a bad principle? Don't you think a man might argue on your principle and say that he is going to the dance, or the billiard hall, or theater, and lift them up for Christ?"

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

In answer to that I would advise you to take these two texts as the guiding stars of your life:

I Cor. 6:12: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

Then I Cor. 10:23: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's good."

The first principle is this: "I will not be brought under the power of any." Doesn't that touch your cigar? I am not now denouncing smoking, but are there not men listening to me who are absolutely under the power of the pipe? They cannot lay it

down and pick it up as they please. They are really under its mastery. It is the same with the use of morphine and the like. And whenever you cannot lay a thing of that kind aside, are you not under its power?

The other principle is equally true. "I will never do a thing which will hurt another." That comes home, young man, to your treatment of women. Always make it easy for a girl to do right, never make it hard for her.

As to the theater, doesn't that law come in there, too? You cannot go there without making the theater possible for others. Even though you and I might go without harm, we are making it possible for others to go who have not such a level head as we have. Then, too, we always must think of the actors and actresses. I dare not make sweeping charges, but statements have been made to me, which I can verify, which make me know that the theater is specially perilous to those whose profession it is.

You say: "What about the dance?"

I do not think you can write HOLINESS TO THE LORD over the waltz. If girls only knew the thoughts which fill many men's hearts when they dance, I do not believe that pure girls would expose themselves to the close embrace of the waltz. It is only because they do not think, and have not had a high standard put before them. If you are a true child of God and have "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" written upon you, you will be very careful, first, how you dress, and then how you dispose of

your body. Anyhow, you ought first ask the Holy Spirit how you may treat His temple.

But I come back to this. Everything which is right, human and holy may be given unto God. I try to make it a rule of my life to pass no day in which I do not see one beautiful thing, read one beautiful thought, hear one sweet strain of music. I try to cultivate my love for beautiful things, and I think I can do that for Jesus.

### ELEVATION.

Let me close with a word about elevation.

It is not a leveling-down policy, but a leveling up. It is not that the high priest should take off his holy plate and think no more of his Temple service than of harnessing his horse for a ride, but that he should mount his horse with the same sense of God as he bore with him unto the Holy Place.

We need to strike the keynote, as a leader of music would if there were no organ, and everything will be accorded to that key. So Sunday strikes the keynote for the week, and your prayer time in the morning strikes the keynote for the day.

But you ask, "How am I to get thus?"

Look upon

### YOUR LIFE AS A CALLING OF GOD.

There are three "callings" in First Corinthians. In 1 Cor. 1:1, called to be an apostle; in 1:2, called to be saints; in 7:20, called to be business men. A call to business life is as great a calling as to be a minister, but go to your life day by day for Jesus.

In Revelation we are told that no one could buy or sell that had not the mark of the beast on the hand or forehead (Rev. 13:16, 17). We are also told that the name of the Lamb shall be in the foreheads of His servants (Rev. 22:4). Every one has the mark of the beast upon their foreheads, or the mark of Christ. We cannot see it, but the angels can; and on every brow in this audience there is inscribed in letters of light or letters of darkness, the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD or the mark of the beast.

Let your life from this time forth be wholly for Jesus. He will not take anything from you that is for your good, but He will accept your whole being, and from this moment until you die it shall be your joy to live absolutely for Christ.

## THE TRINITY OF TEMPTATION.

When the Lord Jesus received the filling of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, He was immediately led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. The person who has been powerfully drawn toward God by the Holy Spirit will be, like the sweep of the pendulum, almost immediately exposed to strong temptation.

It is almost necessary, I think, in order to root the tree deeper in the soil. When I was a boy my schoolmates would go often to a neighboring orchard when the fruit was ripe. You could always tell when the fruit was ripe, because the boys made for it. As long as the fruit of your life is immature and sour, the devil will not trouble you much; but just so soon as your fruit is ready, you may expect all the devils of hell to try to steal it. It may be considered rather an honor to have thieves break into your house, because it shows that you have a repute for having money—thieves never break into a poor man's house. And if the devil comes about your house, it shows that you are becoming better off than you used to be. Count it all joy, therefore, when you are tempted.

Now in dealing with temptation we must remember that a man may be tempted either of God (and

we generally use the word "tried" when we speak of this) or he may be tempted of Satan. In Heb. 11:17 we are told that God did "tempt" or "try" Abraham. God tries us that we may rise; Satan tries us that we may fall. God puts an occasion in our way to be a stepping stone up; Satan puts an occasion in our way to be a stumbling block, and cause us to fall.

I am not now speaking about God's side in trial, but about temptation to failure.

I will take as my basic text a passage, which, if you understand, you will have the key to the mystery of the New Testament. It is found in Ephesians, the second chapter. In the first ten verses you have the seed plot of the main teachings of the Apostle Paul.

He begins with our terrible state in sin through our connection with our first parent, Adam; for every one is connected with Adam in his sin. He says: "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Then he speaks of the trinity of evil.

There are three trinities in the world: The trinity in unity above us, the Father, Son, and Spirit—one God; the trinity within us, spirit, soul and body—one man; and the trinity beneath us, the world, the flesh and the devil.

In Eph. 2:2, 3 you will find: "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world"—there is the world; "according to the prince of the power of the air"—there is the devil; and "in the

lusts of our flesh"—there you have the flesh. These three are present in every temptation that comes to man.

### WHAT IS THE WORLD?

What is the world? In I John 2:26 we are told what is in the world: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." These were the lines along which Christ's three temptations came. These the apostle shows are *in* the world, but he does not give a definition of the world.

The world really is the appearance or semblance of things, a mirage! The Hindoo philosophers call it *maia*—that which attracts, the glamour, the dream, that entices and puzzles the soul, promising much, but always disappointing. Are you not conscious when you are tempted that there is always a sort of bait held out to you of something you are to get, some pleasure or joy? As a matter of fact, you never get lasting pleasure when you do yield to the temptation. It is simply a mirage.

Just as the child blows soap bubbles, which are radiant with a thousand hues, but which, when touched, sink into drops of soapy water: so the worldly spirit is always grasping after the semblance of things, grasping at the unreal.

### WHAT IS THE FLESH?

As for the flesh, there is no better definition than that given in Romans 7:18, where the apostle says, "In me, that is, in my flesh."

"Flesh" is "me-ism," egotism.

Sometimes in London, where they drop their h's,

I tell them that if they will drop the h and spell "flesh" backward, they will get the best definition I know of: "Self." Whenever you meet a man who makes self the pivot of his life, that man is living according to the flesh.

What is the center letter of the word "sin"? "I"; and the center of egotism is "I." The fall was the putting "I" as the center of life, and redemption is putting man back to the center of love, which is "not I." God will finish the work in your soul, when you live, yet not you, but Christ lives in you. When I was in Germany recently, they gave me a beautiful card on which two words were printed—"Ich" (I), and "Er" (He); and the "I" was crossed out by a stroke, leaving only "He." Myself crossed out, Christ the only pivot or center of my life.

Self is the curse of our life before regeneration and after. Before conversion it is clothed in rags; after conversion it becomes respectable and puts on a white dress; but the devil does not care whether it is clothed in one or the other, so long as we have it inside us, dominating us.

The epistle to the Galatians is the great epistle about the flesh, and how to deal with it. There we find two passages to which I call attention.

One is Gal. 5:19, where the apostle enumerates the works of the unregenerate life: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and so on. But if you turn to Gal. 3:3, you will find there were a number of people who began by trusting Jesus for justification, and then tried to perfect themselves by their own

efforts. They were perfectionists. So when I hear people who talk about their goodness, who tell us they are perfect, they are revolving about the pivot of the self-life as much as those who are unregenerate, though probably they are not aware of it.

I believe God will never be satisfied until we have been lifted clean off the "I" pivot and placed upon the "Not I" pivot, until we no longer live for ourselves, but for Jesus Christ, who died for us. The temptation of Satan is to get us to live on the self-pivot, and in order to do that he holds before us the mirage of pleasure which will be ours if only we will make the self-life our objective.

### THE DEVIL.

And now a word about the devil.

The nearer you live to Christ, the more certain you are there is a personal devil. Those who say he is not a real person, not only go in the face of the New Testament, but show they do not know the reality of Jesus Christ. In London, when a gang of thieves wants to get into a house with the most impunity, they advertise that they have left that section. So if the devil can get any one to believe in his non-existence he is much more likely to achieve his designs. The devil does not trouble about those who are not specially spiritual. It is those who stand nearest to Christ who are most assailed. If you are a straggler on the edge of the battle you are likely enough to come off with a whole skin. The devil is evidently a real person,

because Jesus said, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." Mark also II Cor. 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ"; and John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out"; and Rev. 20:2: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years."

Of course, I do not think that the devil has the attributes of God. He does not trouble much about you and me, but reserves himself for Christ, Luther, Spurgeon, and men who are worth his steel; any little demon is strong enough to upset you and me. If you say that the devil tempts everybody you make him omnipresent and omniscient, which are attributes of God alone.

Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the hosts of spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12, revised version). I believe that behind every brothel and saloon there is a demon, that over the darkness of every dark continent, like China or Africa, and any stronghold of evil, there are myriads of demons, who have beneath them principalities and powers. Compare Daniel 10.

In one sentence our Saviour gave the history of Satan. He said: "He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in truth," (John 8:44).

There you have his origin. Probably he was an archangel, and having been created in the truth, he did not remain in it, but, as Jude says, lost his first estate. Before Satan fell, long before this world assumed its present shape, in the period between the first and second verses of Genesis 1, he was the vicegerent of God. Jesus Christ recognized that when He spoke of Satan as the prince of this world. When he was an unfallen archangel, I believe God made him the prince, perhaps of the sun and its attendant worlds. When he fell he dragged down with him other angels and this world, which has been groaning ever since. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not of his own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation should be delivered," (Romans 8:20, 21). I believe that cyclones, devastating tidal waves, and a great deal that is so puzzling in the present world are the result of the reaction of that original fall of Satan, its vicegerent and prince.

Now, why should Satan tempt man to fall? What was the reason for the fall on Satan's side?

In Genesis 1:26, "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let him have dominion." As soon as Satan heard that, it seems as though he thought to himself:

"Have dominion! Man have dominion! It shall never be. I am lord here, fallen though I am. These are my palaces. my court, and man shall never rule over this world!"

So he laid his plan to make man subject to himself, and the whole gist of the fall is that Satan

should rule, should take from the brow of man the crown that the Creator put there.

In the third chapter of Genesis you get the story of the fall. There was the tree which was pleasant to the eyes, and a thing to be desired to make man wise. In that you have the *world*—the appearance, the semblance, the beautiful mirage. Man wants to be wise, to be as God. Next there was the *devil* speaking through the serpent. And you have the *flesh* in what Eve saw, in the 6th verse: "The woman saw that the tree was good for food." The world, the flesh, and the devil! In that moment Eve fell, Satan again became supreme. The threatened intrusion upon his dominion was brought to an end by man becoming his subject.

When I was a young man I never could understand why Milton made *Paradise Regained* turn upon the temptation of Christ. It always seemed to me that I should have made the regaining of Paradise turn upon Calvary. But he could not have done otherwise. When Satan had made man his subject, God's plan seemed thwarted; but God, in the person of His Son, became man and encountered Satan, not in the exercise of His Deity, but "He emptied Himself." He temporarily laid aside the use and exercise of those divine attributes, by which He could stamp Satan under His foot, and entered the arena as a man.

When the holy, blessed Christ met Satan in the wilderness, the first temptation was repeated, only the conditions were worse. It was not in a garden, but in a wilderness. Adam was tempted in his inno-

cence; Christ as the scion of a biased race. Again there was the question of food—not a tree with its luscious fruit, but stones of the desert and the hunger in our Saviour's body. Satan said to Eve:

"You have all you want to eat. Now take that fruit to make you wise."

But the tempter knew Christ had hunger, not for a luxury, but a necessity, and he said:

"You have power. Use it. Feed yourself."

"No," said Christ, "if I did I should have an existence independent of God. I depend upon my Father, and when my Father sees I want food He will send it."

The moment Christ said that, He undid, as far as He was concerned, the coil the devil had woven around Adam and our race.

Christ was also tempted by the world. There was the mirage, the semblance of the nations of the world, in a moment of time, and Satan said:

"See how fair the empire is. You need not die, you need not bear the cross. All this is mine, and I can give it to you. Only worship me."

Christ knew that if He worshipped him the semblance of the empire of the world would have fallen to dust. It would not have been His. The devil had lied. Christ could not rule men unless He died for them. So Christ withstood the temptation of the world, and said:

"No, Satan, I will not take it at that price, but I will get it nevertheless. I will not have it as your gift, but my Father's; not by conquering, but by dying a death of shame."

There are two mountains in our Saviour's life, the mount of temptation and the mount of ascension. On the mount of temptation Christ saw the kingdoms of the world, and the devil said: "I will give Thee these if Thou wilt worship me." But the Lord refused and went down that mountain poor, lonely, to suffering and to death; but at last through the cross and the grave He came out on the other side more than a conqueror, and said: "All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth. Go and preach." He refused the devil's crown and got God's crown; and one day we shall hear the anthem float over the redeemed world, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."

But it would not help us if Jesus had done this for Himself only. We must remember that on the cross Jesus Christ became the representative man, and again He met the world, the flesh, and the devil in the hour of His weakness.

If He could overcome them then, what can He not do now He is strong in resurrection glory? He said distinctly in John 14:30: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"; and again, "I have overcome the world." When our Saviour died He put his foot on the devil; He bruised the serpent's head. When He rose as the representative man He was raised above the power of the devil, and got back the dominion that God gave Adam, and Adam lost. We see not yet all things put under man, but we see Jesus crowned with

glory and honor (Hebrews 2:8, 9). In the ascended Lord, man rose above the devil and resumed the honor and glory, the power and authority, with which God had endowed him in the first moments of his creation. When Satan saw that God was lifting our race, in the person of a perfect man, to sit in glory, he knew that the work of six thousand years was in vain, and that in spite of everything God's purpose would stand, that man should have dominion and power.

Now, here are two men. On the one hand there is the first Adam. By the first birth you and I were born of him, and are all children of a fallen man. The devil knows that, and as long as you are living in the old Adam he feels free to do as he will with us, because he has already subdued the father, and he knows he can subdue the child. By the second birth we are born into the second Adam, the royal Christ, and stand in Him, and He has made us kings and priests. The pity is that men do not use their royalty!

This is one of the most wonderful subjects that a man can present to his fellows,—the intention of God to give men royalty; the jealousy of the devil in trying to stop it. God refusing to have His plans frustrated, coming down as though the God-man should fight a battle with His right hand tied behind Him, and saying to Satan, "I will come down and overcome you with my left hand, without the use of my deity." In the wilderness He overcame him. All through His life in His weak-

ness He met the devil and overcame him. On the cross He met him once more. Satan said to Him: "Spare Thyself."

But the Lord answered: "Never. I refuse to do as you tell me. I am going to do the Father's will, and if My Father leads Me to bear the sin of the world, I will bear it, though it bring midnight on My soul. I will do My Father's will."

When we believe thus, and take our stand in the risen Lord, Satan is powerless.

It happened in Switzerland once that two travelers went to explore an extremely difficult part of the Alps. They took three guides. When they reached a steep cliff of ice they roped themselves together, first a guide, then a traveler, then a guide, then a traveler, and then a guide, and they began to climb up the cliff. As the first guide crawled up he cut in the ice little rests for the feet of those who followed, and the whole five of them crept carefully and anxiously up the side of the cliff.

When they were midway, the last man lost his footing. As he swayed to and fro he dislodged the man above him. He tried to regain his footing, and could not, and pulled the third, and the third the fourth, and four of them were swinging slowly to and fro over the precipice.

When the first guide perceived what was happening, he drove his ice-ax with all his might into the cliff above him, and held to it. As he stood firm, the man beneath had time to get his footing,

and the man beneath, until the whole were saved because the first man stood.

Jesus Christ has bound us to Him, but some of us have lost our footing; we cannot keep the notch. But if we are linked to Christ by faith, we shall keep our standing, in spite of temptations, and Christ will bring Satan under our feet.

## THE RULE OF OUR THOUGHTS.

I have explained that you might expect to be tempted to the end of your life, that the nearer you live to God, the more you will be tempted. The presence of temptation in your life is not a proof of deterioration, but the contrary, for the more you know of God on the one hand the more you will know of Satan's temptation, on the other hand.

If you desire to be kept from yielding to temptation, you must be very careful of your thoughts, and it is about the necessity of guarding your thoughts that I am going to speak now.

### KEEP THY HEART CLEAN.

First, let us look at Prov. 4:23, where the wise man says: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life," or as the revised version puts it: "Keep thy heart above all things that thou keepest."

You keep your wealth, you keep your home, you keep your health, you keep your character, but above all these things keep your heart. Why? Because out of it are the issues of life.

When Bunyan depicted the character of Ignorance, he made him say:

"I think my heart is as good as anybody's heart, and as for my thoughts, I take no notice of them."

He shows at once that he does not know himself, and that he is exposed to every temptation that crosses his path. If you have never before noticed your thoughts you will find before I am done that the first suggestion of wrong comes through the doorway of the mind.

Turn again to Prov. 23:7, and read: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

The thoughts lay down the tram lines upon which presently the tram car makes its way. Just as the tram car will pass up and down the rails in a great city, so does the act follow along the track of the thought.

I know there are men who say, "I must not do that act, but I may indulge the thought of doing it." There are those who dare not act impurely, but during the hours of darkness they allow their thoughts to wander where they will, and such men and women think they have escaped wrong; but let them understand that those thoughts are all noted by God, and they will have to account for them at the day of judgment. Let them also know that the thoughts they have entertained in their hearts will find an issue, and there will be some act in their life, perhaps ten years hence, as a result of these unholy thoughts. Sometimes it seems rather terrible that a life should be blasted by one act, and you may be disposed to pity the man and say that it is hard for him to be judged and crippled for the rest of his life by the passionate act of a single moment. But remember that an act is never alone. It really sums up trains of unholy thought in which

the man has been indulging, and therefore you do not judge him for the one act, but for the process of which it is the result. The tree was eaten through before it crashed to the ground in the storm.

### THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN.

The Word of God tells us, in Gen. 6:5: "God saw that the wickedness of man was very great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Away back in the days of Noah the trouble God had with man was in his thoughts. The whole trend of the Bible is to get our thinking right.

As a contrast to that verse in Genesis, I quote Phil. 4:8: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, think on these things."

Up to the doorway of your heart are always coming hundreds and thousands of thoughts, and you must be careful to reject the evil ones and let into your soul only those that are of good report. If these are the tenants of the inner life, you need have no fear about your character. I am prepared to say that if you think right, you need not take much care about your life.

Butler in his Analogy says there are three steps in the formation of character—act, habit, character. The act makes the habit, the habit or the bundle of habits form the character. Thackeray amplified this saying thus: "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap character; sow character, reap destiny."

I illustrated this not long ago to an audience of children by showing a thread, and attached to it a piece of twine, then a rope, then a chain, and padlock. I tied the thread around a boy, and he broke it easily. But I gradually wound the twine and rope and chain about him to show the power of habit. The thread was the thought leading to the act, the rope was the habit, the chain was character, ending in the padlock of destiny.

Our Lord announces the same truth in Mark 7:21: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." Then He names some of the sins—adultery, fornication, murder, thefts, covetousness. They all begin in the evil thoughts. In Eph. 2:3 we are told: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in time past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." The Greek says "the desires of the flesh and the thoughts." I want you to notice that, "*fulfilling* the desires of the flesh and the thoughts." Desire is not in itself wrong. The affections and propensities of our nature are not wrong in themselves. God gave these to us to pull along the chariots of our lives. He put within us all manner of appetites and propensities which are His own beautiful gifts. The wrong comes in in two ways: if we desire too much of the right thing, and if we desire gratification in a wrong way. Whenever desire oversteps the bounds, or seeks gratification in a wrong way, it becomes lust.

You cannot help the bad thoughts coming. As one of the Puritans said: "You cannot help the

birds flying over your head, but you can keep them from building their nests in your hair." Some are part of us by heredity. Then the papers and books we read, the pictures which are exhibited in store windows and in art galleries, the conversations we overhear,—all around us there are many things exciting and appealing to us, and we are having unholy desires constantly presented to our mind. But we must not *fulfill* them. We may have the temptations to lust presented to us, but there is a vast difference between that and having the lust gratified. The evil thought may come to your door and knock, and you may keep your door locked. You sin when you open your heart and let the thought in and gloat over it. Then desire becomes lust.

In James 1:14, 15 we read: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. For when the lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Let me illustrate by the use of botany. You know that flowers have their sex, and the bees gathering honey in one flower carry the pollen to another, and the result is flower and fruit. Precisely in the same way the heart of man is always open, and bees of all kinds seem to bring the pollen of unholy thoughts; when these are sown in the desires of our nature, there is at once the result of which St. James speaks. As soon as you allow the evil thought to mingle with your nature, it bringeth forth the act of sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

I am not speaking now of the sinful state which we have inherited from Adam, but of the act of sin. Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth this child of sin, and its grandchild, which is death. There you have the parent, child and grandchild.

Now we may say that bad thoughts fly about like microbes. Our system of surgery has been entirely transformed in Great Britain by the recent discovery of the influence of microbes. We are now taught that the air is filled with microbes. The surgeons always keep their instruments in a solution of carbolic acid, so that when an instrument makes an incision in the flesh it will not carry microbes with it. This is to prevent suppuration, which is only the multiplication of microbes in an open wound.

What microbes are to the body, bad thoughts are to the soul. As you have to use antiseptics to check microbes, so you must live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, who is the antiseptic to bad thoughts. These thoughts come from Satan. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices," (II Cor. 2:11). The Greek is, "We are not ignorant of his thoughts." Satan is always starting evil thoughts.

To use a simile that anybody can understand, the soul is like a castle with a great gateway. Many people leave the gateway of their soul open, so that every vagrant, truant evil thought may come pouring in and do as it likes. At the gateway of your soul there are many thoughts apparently innocent, but really great traitors. If you keep your gate-

way unguarded, unsentinelled, these thoughts pour in and out, backwards and forwards, and presently blow up your whole soul with passion.

Therefore, in dealing with our thoughts, two things are necessary: First, discernment; and second, keeping power.

We read in Isaiah 28:5, 6: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." The Lord of hosts shall be two things: first, a spirit of judgment, and secondly, strength. Are not these what we need?

### DISCERNMENT.

First, we want to be able to sift out bad thoughts from good thoughts; to know the traitor, however well he is dressed, and keep him out.

We need discernment. Why? Because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds," that is, the thoughts, "of them that believe not," that is, the unregenerate (II Cor. 4:4). Man is blind. He sits at the gateway of his soul, hearing the tread of many feet, but unable to discern the bad from the good; blind, so that all thoughts are much the same, and he lets them all in, to his own undoing.

Next, we find the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through ignorance (Eph. 4:18). It is twilight to the soul, and even though the man tries to see he cannot, because in the dim twilight bad thoughts and good thoughts come in alike, and he does not distinguish one from the other. I lived years of my life ignorant of the true nature of my thoughts, because I was blind

and lived in twilight. Those who live near to God are keen to detect these thoughts.

The men of Israel once asked their fleeing foes to say "Shibboleth," and they said "Sibboleth" (Judges 12;6). They could not say "sh," and Israel caught them and slew the traitors. We need some test like that at the heart gate to catch the evil thoughts. If a thought cannot pronounce the name of Christ right, cast it out. Question it, "Can you say Jesus?"

"He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man," or, as the revised version has it, "he who is spiritual *discerneth* all things" (I Cor. 2:15). I suppose one mark of the spiritual man is his quickness in discerning. For my part, I used not to see sin until it was against my face, but now I can see it coming two or three fields away. You get keener and subtler to discern. It is a mistake to wait until your enemy is face to face. Pray to be quick to discern.

In Heb. 5:14 is a verse that has helped me much: "Even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

By reason of use you get keener. I go with the savage through the wilds, and notice that he looks at that bent twig, at that grass brushed down across the path. He starts and says:

"A man has been along here."

I don't see any trace, I can't find any footmark; but in that snapped twig, in the impression on that grass the savage, by reason of use, has had his senses exercised to discern where man has gone.

Now, most of us never use our spiritual sense. God has given us a nose to smell with, eyes to see with, hands to feel with, a tongue to taste with. We are made in three parts—body, soul and spirit. The soul has senses equivalent to those of the body, and the spirit behind that has a third set of senses which an unregenerate man has not commenced to use. But if you are a spiritual man you will use these spiritual senses to discriminate the thoughts as they come to your heart. "By reason of use" you will have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

I remember once going back from the United States across the ocean, and getting my lungs full of ozone. On reaching England I went to a watering place to stay with some dear friends. They said:

"Isn't this a lovely place?"

I tried to think so, but as I went out on the doorstep I detected a very noxious smell. I said:

"I am very sorry, but I am not at all sure that this place is as healthy as you think it."

"Of course it is," they said; "it is swept by the wind from the North Sea."

I inquired and found that within about a mile of their house there was what is called a sewage farm, and a whiff from those fields neutralized all the benefit of the sea breezes.

My friends asked how I came to be so keen of scent, and I replied:

"You have come from London where you live

in a vitiated atmosphere, but I have come off the Atlantic and am used to pure air, so can detect a bad smell where you cannot."

If you live in the midst of bad people, bad books and bad things, you lose your power of detecting bad thoughts when they come teeming about you like microbes. But if every day you spend an hour on God's mountains or upon the broad sea of the Bible, and get some of God's ozone into you, you will be able to detect things which are wrong, which other people, even Christians, pass without seeing as wrong.

You have heard me speak about bad pictures in stores or art galleries, bad novels and certain sorts of talk, and I can imagine a professed Christian lady saying as she passes out:

"Well, I call that being too particular. Why is it that he lays such stress upon the matter?"

She thinks I am drawing too fine a line.

Possibly that lady has lived in the midst of tittle-tattle and small talk, until her senses have become perfectly vitiated, so that she has lost the power of discernment. But I dare not touch these things, because I am learning to know when evil is in the air, and by the grace of God my senses are becoming quicker to discern good and evil.

### KEEPING POWER.

Suppose we see the importance of learning to discriminate between bad and good thoughts. But we find that sometimes for a whole day there will be knocking at the door of our heart, the gateway

of our soul, bad thoughts which we know to be bad. They gather into a perfect crowd. We somehow do not seem to have the power to keep them out, and they force in, though we hate them and loathe them, and would do almost anything to be quit of them; and presently lead us to commit an act of sin. Many a good man understands that.

At this point let us turn to I Peter 4:19, where the apostle says: "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God," because they are true to God's will, "commit the keeping of their soul to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

"Commit." That is the Greek word used by Christ on the cross when He said: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Just as Jesus commended His spirit to His Father, so do you, when you leave your room in the morning, commit the keeping of the gatewav of your soul to Him.

"As to a faithful Creator." Why call Him Creator here? Why not Redeemer, or Saviour? Because He made you; and is not the God who made you able to keep you? Is He who made you what you are, going to allow you unaided to drift before evil? He is a faithful Creator! He created you, and He is faithful to keep you, and He knows how to do it. The man who made the lock can unlock it. Reckon on His faithfulness.

### THE PEACE OF GOD.

I close with two texts that are like binary stars. Col. 3:15: "Let the peace of God rule," and the

word means *arbitrate.* Leave it for the peace of God to say what you will or will not do. Group with that Phil. 4:7: "The peace of God shall keep." The word there is *sentinel.* So that you have the peace of God ruling and sentinelling, keeping, governing. Think of the peace of God, armed like an angel of light, marching to and fro outside your heart, just keeping it!

I was talking one day to some people about emptying their hearts, and I illustrated by a glass of water. I can empty it either by pouring the water upon the floor, or by filling the glass with quicksilver, which is heavier than water. and by its weight will force the water out. The glass is just as empty of water when it is filled with quicksilver as if I simply poured the water out. It is impossible to empty your heart by turning out the sin, but you may empty it by filling it with Jesus. Ask then the Holy Spirit to prepossess and preoccupy you with the presence of Jesus, that the devil may have no foothold.

## THE STRONG MAN ARMED.

Luke 11:21, 22: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

I want to tell you the story of a house of which I know something, for I have lived in one of the same pattern for many years. It consists of three stories. It is of magnificent appearance. Some say it was built as the palace of a king, there is so much splendor and embellishment, though some of the rooms are tawdry now.

The lower story is most occupied. There is at the far end the kitchen, in which the inmate spends a considerable amount of time. Next to that is the drinking saloon. Next to that the narcotic room, which is filled with drugs of one kind and another. Next to that the recreation or amusement room. Behind that is the sleeping room, and behind that again a room which is generally closed and blinded, because things are done there in secret of which, the apostle says, it is a shame even to speak.

Above this is another tier of rooms. The first on the right is called the room of archives, for there sits a scribe, always at work recording the past. Next to that is the library, or thought room, but the books that line the shelves of that library are

mostly dummies. There is the outward appearance of a book, but within there is little or nothing but empty pages, or foolish or impure stories. Next comes the imagination room, in which a painter is always embellishing the walls with magnificent creations of his fancy, but as quickly as they are finished they are erased, and he begins his work again. Next to that is the room of friendship and love, which is surrounded by the portraits of men and women and little children. Beyond that the bullion room, where a machine is kept for turning out money day and night.

I want for a moment to speak about the rooms on the third floor, which are not often used. The center one is magnificently appareled in satin and gold. It contains a throne, which I am afraid in many houses is covered with dust and stains. Indeed the whole room shows signs of neglect, and is filled with dust and cobwebs. On one side is the hall of judgment, in which great decisions are made. On the other side is the hall of conscience, surrounded by mirrors and glasses, and in these a man may see himself reflected at any angle and on every side. At the far end there is a room called the room of hope, which looks over a river to a city far away, apparently in cloudland—a sort of observatory. On the other side is a chapel, a place prepared for worship, for high and holy service.

It is said that this house was built by a great king for his own residence, and indeed his monogram is still to be seen, though in many cases it has been sadly spoiled and worn. But his prime min-

ister or one of his chief servants, having a controversy with his master, threw off his authority, broke into this palace, and has appropriated it for himself.

I need not tell you that I have been holding up a looking glass to yourself. You are the house, with the three stories of your nature, the lower one, the body; the one above that, the mind; and the one above that, the spirit. The body which touches the world, the mind or soul in which you think and resolve, and the spirit, which in too many is utterly neglected and given over to vacancy. There is the throne room which is meant for God; judgment, where you should come to decisions in consonance with His will; conscience, where you should see and know yourself; and the chapel, where you should worship. But in how many cases that house of your nature, which was built for the home of your eternal God, that He might abide in your heart, has been wrested away from Him and handed over to His enemy, the powerful Satan, whom our Lord describes in this passage as "the strong man armed."

Yes, Satan is stronger than Adam in his innocence, than Moses in his meekness, than Job in his patience, than Peter in his courage and fervor. The strongest and fairest of the children of men have fallen before the masterfulness of Satan.

I want to show you this palace in three aspects. First, when it is in peace under its wrong owner. Then for a time he goes out and leaves it, but the true owner does not return. And third, the tri-

umph of the true owner when he comes back and keeps it from all comers.

IN PEACE.

First, I have to speak to you of the stage when the strong man armed keeps his palace, and his goods are at peace. The palace is at peace. It seems as though the rose had climbed up and hidden the walls beneath its rich and luxuriant foliage, and all over the palace, as over that in Tennyson's poem, there is lethargy and sleep. The palace seems lulled in perfect repose.

There are people here tonight who have been drawn here by their friends, and as they hear me preach about these things which touch God and eternity, as they hear my cry to repent and trust in Christ, they say:

"Why bring these things under our notice? We are happy as a bird. We have no fear, though we have none of your religion. Why do you force it upon us? Why don't you leave us still amid the charm of this enjoyment of life which steeps our hearts and souls?"

Why? Because that spirit of calm is the worst trait in your history.

There are two kinds of peace. There is the peace of Jesus sleeping in the boat, resting upon His Father's care, and there is the peace of Jonah, sleeping in the hold of the ship while the storm is raging around him. There is the peace of Peter, who sleeps between two soldiers on the eve of his execution, and the sleep of Saul, when Abishai

stands over him with drawn spear. Your peace is the peace of despair, the peace of death, the peace of ruin, the peace of the garrison sleeping at their posts while the enemy is creeping up. It is the peace of a mother and child sleeping in their home while a stream of oil fire is rolling down the street, which will presently involve them in ruin.

"He keepeth his goods in peace." His goods. He says of you, "That man is mine. I have him. I'll drag him down to the place prepared for the devil and his angels." He watches and keeps the palace day and night with untiring watchfulness. He holds you fast, and you are at peace.

But he is armed with a lie! Your soul is happy because things are so bad. It is the worst sign.

My child is ill; I call the doctor. He goes up stairs with the mother. When he comes down I say:

"Well, doctor?"

"She's very bad."

"Is there any hope?"

"Yes; one hope is that she suffers so. If the pain stops, telephone for me, and I'll come at once. It will show the worst symptom has set in."

An hour later my wife comes down stairs and says:

"The worst is over."

"How do you know?" I ask.

"Well, ten minutes ago the child ceased to suffer, and is now easy."

"Good God!" I say, "that is the worst symptom! Not to feel at all is the worst sign."

My friend, the worst thing about you is that you have ceased to suffer. If only conscience pricked you; if only sometimes you felt uneasy; if only you started up at night and thought you would be lost; if only there came a dread of sin and the judgment seat of God! Then there would be some hope for you. But because you are past feeling, because God has given you up, you are of all men the most to be pitied.

The strong man armed keeps his palace. When the babe stirs a bit because of the baying of those hounds, the strong man armed sits with his feet upon the cradle and keeps it rocking. When the soul stirs up and says, "Perhaps I will be lost," he says, "Hush; that man is an alarmist! There is no truth in that Bible. There is no heaven to seek, no hell to dread. Think of your money and the things which come under the observation of your senses, but don't worry about those things."

That's the lullaby with which the strong man hushes the soul back. Yet in spite of it, sometimes the soul wakes up and says:

"I am not satisfied. I am not at rest. Is there not a God, a future? and I am not prepared for it!"

"Hush, hush," says the strong man, and again administers an opiate. "Go to the theater, spend your life in pleasure, but get away from that thought."

I am talking to men and women who are at peace, not because they are justified, not because they are washed in the blood of Christ, but because their conscience has been crushed under the devil's

foot until sensibility has gone out of it, mortification has set in.

THE STRONG MAN GOES OUT.

The second picture is a striking one. The Lord says that sometimes the strong man goes out.

Mind you, he is not turned out, but he goes out. He goes out but Christ does not come in.

You have seen men like that. They have reformed, but are not regenerated. The devil has driven a man so far that he is afraid he will wake up. The prodigal in a far country is beginning to get restive. The devil says:

"If I don't take care I will lose this man, so I will drop off for a time, and then I shall get him more safe than ever."

Perhaps some men to whom I am speaking have fished for salmon, and they know what I mean by playing with the fish. Sometimes you get a heavy fish. If you begin to pull it in, you will lose it, and besides break your line. What do you do? You begin to play with it. If it swims off, you let the line run out as fast as it will. When it gets tired, you again draw in the line. After three or four hours that salmon will be so tired you can do pretty nearly what you want with it, and land it with your net.

That is how the evil one is dealing with some men. You don't feel his pull just now, but he has not let go. He is giving you a breathing space, but he will draw you presently to his net.

The man says he is going to turn over a new leaf. He "quits his meanness." He gives up for a time his tyrannical behavior in his dealing with his family,

and the wife blesses God that the unkind treatment has ceased. He no longer frequents the saloon. For a time he goes to church with his wife. When a revivalist comes along he is moved by what he hears, and at the end of the meeting he steps up, shakes hands, says he likes the sermon, and gives every sign that he has become a religious man. He goes regularly to church, and gives away a portion of his income. As our Lord says, his house is empty, swept and garnished. All the worst evils are swept out of his life. He has a pledge-card nicely framed and hung on the wall. He buys a large Bible—too large to use, but good to look at. He invites the minister to tea. There is everything about that man to show that he has turned over a new leaf; but mind you, the only goodness which is going to stand in eternity is the goodness which he receives ready-made from the Son of God! Plenty of men sit stitching a robe of goodness which they hope will stand when they pass the judgment seat of God. But I want to tell you the only robe which will stand the scrutiny of the judgment throne is the one which Jesus Christ wove on the cross, and the one which He only gives when you are born again. If you have not got from Christ the robe of His righteousness, there is nothing that you can do for yourself which will be other than filthy rags when He comes in judgment.

So here is the house. I think I see it before me now. Outwardly at least that man looks a clean man, and people say:

"I warrant that man has made a change for the better. He looks a happier, better man."

Yes, he is, outwardly, but there is no indwelling Christ, hence the devil comes back. He looks in at the windows of the house. "Is Christ here?" He cannot see any trace of Him. He shouts through the keyhole, "Is Christ here?" and there is no answer, but the echo of his own voice. He goes around to the back door (for the devil is mortally afraid of Christ), and asks, "Is Christ here?" No. The house is empty. The only power in that man's life is his own resolutions. The devil knows he can easily break them down; and he walks in, it may be after one month, or seven months, or seven years. Then he goes off and calls seven other devils worse than himself, and they enter in, and at the end that man's state is worse than at the beginning.

I stand here weighted with the burden of souls. In our churches we let people in too lightly. I lament to say that often too many have been admitted to membership because they have turned over a new leaf, because they are respectable. We do not go into the matter to be quite certain and accurate that they are saved. So men become members, and even officers of our churches, who have never known what it was to be born again, and who have no Christ tenanting their souls.

I would like to single out each person in this place and say:

"Hast thou been born again? Hast thou received Jesus to dwell in thy heart? Art thou believing for salvation in the finished work of Christ? Hast thou learned thine own righteousness is noth-

ing but filthy rags, and the only thing which can make the soul safe here and hereafter is Jesus? Jesus on the throne, Jesus in the heart, Jesus in the life—Jesus, the Saviour, the King, the Friend."

If you do not know it, I beseech you, do not sleep tonight until you have built your house upon the rock which will stand forever.

You say, "How may I get right? How may I be born again?" I deeply sympathize with you in your desire to be certain. My mother was a lovely Christian, and I remember to have said my prayers at her knee from the very earliest dawn of my boyhood. I suppose that for me the new birth was like the dawn of the morning; I never had any marked experience that I could look back upon. When I was about 14 years of age a new minister came to our church and insisted very much on the necessity of the new birth. I was in trouble, because I could not point to any time or place or cause.

Then it was that I went to hear Mr. Spurgeon, and I heard him say that a man might not know his birthday, but be quite sure that he was living. That helped me, for I did not know my spiritual birthday, but I knew I was alive.

It is not necessary that you should have any startling experience, but it is necessary that you should believe in Jesus Christ.

Look at my hand. It has two sides to it, the back towards the light above us, and the palm to towards the floor. You cannot take that hand without taking both sides of it. So the act by

which you became the child of God and are saved. has two names to it. Angels call it "being born again"; men call it "trusting Jesus." If you trust Jesus you are born again, and if you are born again you will trust Jesus. You cannot tell which comes first any more than you can tell which spoke in a wheel moves first, for they move together.

If right now you will look to Jesus Christ who died for you; or if you cannot see Him, you will look in the direction in which He stands and from which His voice comes; if you choose to believe; if you hand over your soul's salvation for Him to see to for you, that's saving faith. If you have that faith, whether you have any marked experience or not does not matter, but you are as much saved as the angels in heaven.

### THE STRONG MAN CAST OUT.

Once more I want you to see this palace for the third time under new auspices. I hear marching music! I hear the voice of the angel escort! A stronger than the strong man is on His way. Stronger because He met Satan in the wilderness and overcame him; stronger, because all through His life He met the demons and cast them out; stronger, because in the hour of His weakness on the cross, He took a man from the very jaws of hell and carried him to Paradise; stronger, because He went up to heaven triumphant over the powers of hell.

Jesus comes! He comes to you tonight and, mark, He comes to that door and summons you to

surrender. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door, I will come in." The strong man is there and Christ is there. Tonight is going to decide your life. Satan is holding you; never before was he holding you so nervously and tenaciously as he is doing now.

But he shall not permanently hold you against our Lord. I tell you, man, you are going to get free. Those oaths are coming out of your lips. Those dirty thoughts are going to cease out of your heart. You will never again want to go to that house of ill fame. You are going to be delivered absolutely, utterly from the passions which have held unholy riot in your soul. God knows the banqueting room and worship hall have sometimes been filled with carousing scenes which made all heaven shudder. All that is to be ended now. I speak with prophetic voice. I hear Christ's footfall as He comes to set you free, to cleanse and purify your soul, so you will hate the things which now you think you cannot live without, and will love the things which now you care nothing for. Tonight you shall be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's love.

So Jesus Christ waits. But listen, He says, "He that is not with Me is against Me." Satan is in occupation, and Jesus waits without. Jesus must have a sign from you that you want Him. That is all. He will do the fighting, the saving, but you must indicate that you desire Him.

I was told the other day a very interesting thing about one of the ancestors of the family with whom

I was stopping. She was only in a swoon, but they thought she was dead, and were preparing to carry her forth for interment. But one that was standing by saw the quivering of an eyelid. Immediately they removed her from the coffin, laid her upon the bed, and went to work to revive her, and presently she came back to consciousness, and lived for some ten years longer, a hearty, robust life. Saved by the quivering of an eye-lid, that showed she was not entirely gone!

Oh, man, Jesus waits and Satan waits. This is the hour of your choice. Jesus only asks thee not to resist and refuse, but to choose; and though thy choice tonight be as slight as the quivering of an eye-lid, let Christ see it. Look to Him! It is all He wants, and He will come into your heart.

When Christ comes, and He comes now, He will drive before Him passion, and lust, and unclean desire. He will take away the love of drink, the love of sin. He will cleanse and keep your heart. Do not try to make the heart clean for Him. He was born in a stable, and He can make even a stable a palace.

I close with a favorite story of mine.

Augustine was swept as by a mighty current between two women, his mother, Monica, a saintly woman, and another woman, who had fascinated him almost to damnation. His life hovered between these two just as your life hovers between Christ and Satan. Sometimes Monica attracted him heavenward, and then the evil influence of this woman dragged him to the very pit of the abyss. The con-

flict was long and terrible and Augustine was like a chip upon the tide, swept backward and forward.

One afternoon, he states in his memorable confessions, he and his friend were in the garden together, and he thought he heard voices as of children calling over the garden wall, saying:

"Take and read!"

He thought it meant he was to take up the New Testament, which Monica had left on the garden seat. He picked it up and read in Romans, thirteenth chapter, about casting off the works of darkness and putting on the works of light.

Instantly he arose. He had made his decision. He had counted the cost. He told his friend, and they went and told Monica, and Monica was glad.

The next day he went down the main street of Carthage. As he did so, he met the woman who had been the fascination of his soul for evil. As he met her she said:

"Augustine, it is I!"

He said, "It is not I," and passed her and was saved. He became, as you know, St. Augustine.

I know in my soul that I am talking to Augustines here; men who know better, but are doing worse; men who have sweet wives and the memory of holy mothers, and when they go home and take their little children upon their knees, it is impossible to describe the rush of holy love that comes. I tell you, your heart is between Satan and Christ—Satan, who will ruin it, and Christ, who wants to inhabit it. This is the moment of your choice. If you will quit sin and give yourself to God you shall yet be "St. Augus-

tine," the father of a multitude of children of God. There is a wonderful destiny awaiting you. You must call in Jesus Christ, and if you will, He will come in and keep you.

When I was a pastor at Leicester, there was a strike. The work people smashed property and ruined homes in their riot. One day they threatened to come into a house which I knew, where there was a big brother riveting shoes in the attic upstairs, and a little fellow downstairs. The little fellow feared they were going to break the house open. He went to the stairs and called his big brother:

"Tom, Tom, they are going to smash this door open! Make haste and come down."

He was a strong, well-built man, and he came down, put his big body against the door, and said:

"Now, youngster, you go on with your game. All the rioters in Leicester can't break this door open when brother Tom stands by it."

The devil often wants to come back to this house of mine, and I am afraid of him, but when he comes along and swears he will take me by force, I go to the foot of the ascension ladder, and I cry:

"Christ! Christ! Stronger than the strong man, make haste and come down. The devil is going to get me!"

And He seems to come like the lightning flash, and puts Himself against the door of my heart, and all hell can't break the door open!

## GOD'S RUBBISH HEAP.

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?"—Isaiah 45:9.

The word "potsherd" arrests one. I have in my mind's eye a garden I know full well, and at the end of it in a corner there is quite a heap of rubbish. There are the cinders from the fire by which the hothouse is warmed, and often remnants of decayed vegetable matter, and often pieces of broken pottery, or china. I can see a bit of broken flower pot emerging from the dark cinders. That is a potsherd, a sherd or shred of pottery which is useless. It is fit only to be thrown away. It is waste.

And God says that those Israelites who complained about His delivering them by Cyrus were risking being thrown away upon His rubbish heap.

Isaiah seems in fancy to have heard a potsherd talking to a potsherd, one piece of pottery antagonizing another; and he says it is better for a piece of pottery to argue with another piece than for either of them to antagonize the potter.

I am afraid lest some of you may be on God's rubbish heap, and I forget everything else in my desire to save your life from being thrown aside as a waste, because if it is thrown aside as waste in

this world there is the dread of the waste forever. I dare not hold out to people the hope of a second chance. The whole drift of the Bible is against it. What an awful thing it would be for a man to mislead his fellowmen, who would say to him one day, when he meets them coming back from the Judgment throne as waste product,

"Why didn't you tell us that destiny was irrevocable?"

### JERUSALEM'S RUBBISH HEAP.

"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Gehenna, into the fire that never shall be quenched." (Mark 9:43). Now, what was Gehenna? It is a Hebrew word, the Valley of Hinnons. Just outside of Jerusalem there was a deep ravine which had been used for idolatry, and the good king Josiah resolved that it should be used for a refuse heap of Jerusalem. They did not have the system of drainage that we have, but made use of fire, and for the most part they took their refuse out of Jerusalem, and trundled it over to the Valley of Gehenna, to the fires which were always kept burning. Gehenna was the rubbish heap of Jerusalem, and Christ says that what Gehenna was to Jerusalem, another place is to the universe, and that the man who refused to lose hand or foot or eye that made him offend, was in danger of being flung away by God as a waste product. Notice the 44th verse, "Where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." That is God's rubbish heap.

I am told that you have in the mountains a number of people who are contemptuously called "white trash." I know there is a good deal of soul-trash about. Maybe if you don't take care, you will become soul-trash, which God cannot do anything with, and will have to cast out, to be trodden under foot.

God gives every man a chance. He gives him long enough to reveal himself. The prayer book says: "He hates nothing that He has made." But after having given man, woman or child a chance of revealing their inner nature and making their final choice, God may be compelled to cast a certain number away, because they will not realize the purpose for which they were created. There is always waste going on. For every acorn that bears an oak are there hundreds of acorns that bear no seed that fructifies. Many professing Christians will never be counted worthy to obtain that world, but will force God to throw them aside. Darwin taught us that out of myriads born into the natural world, only a few survive—"the survival of the fittest." Now in his sense the word "fit" meant the strongest, the most vigorous; but in the Bible sense the word fit does not mean strong or intellectual, but a certain moral quality about which I wish to speak now.

### WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE TEST?

What is it that proves a man to be a waste product? What is the ultimate thing which compels God to fling a man or a woman away, like Judas, who went to his own place?

Is it creed? Supposing a man holds an orthodox creed, does that prove that he will escape the rubbish heap?

I don't think so for a moment. It is not our intellectual standing or opinions which determine our destiny. I say deliberately to you who have been brought up in orthodox views, who attend an evangelical ministry, if that be all, the most orthodox creed on earth cannot save you from being flung away like a potsherd.

Will one passionate sin fling a man on the rubbish heap? There are sins of passion and sins of will, and I think we ought to make a distinction. David's sin with Uriah's wife was one of passion, not of final choice, determination and purpose. He was overcome by a gust. Of course I believe that the tree had become somewhat rotten before the trial came, or it would not have gone down in the storm. But, evidently, from Christ's treatment of Peter, and of the woman who washed His feet with tears, one momentary outbreak of passion, though it may injure a man as far as his fellow Christians are concerned, is not enough to determine his irrevocable destiny if with bitter tears it is put away.

Will the absence of religious emotion determine our destiny?

There are men who are destitute of emotion. They don't remember having wept a tear. Whenever people become full of excitement, they remain calm and cool, and rather despise those who are swept off their feet by storms of feeling. They have visited churches where a revival has been in full blast, and

have come away feeling that it was the antipodes to anything they were conscious of. They are cool, calculating, resolute, determined men, and they are altogether destitute of emotion.

I want to say to any man like that, that the absence of emotion is not a crucial test of character. A man may be without emotion, and unable to appreciate some who are more inclined to be influenced by feeling and religious sentiment. But this is not sufficient to cast a man aside from God.

What then? It is not creed, it is not one passionate sin, it is not, so far as I can see, emotional sentiment that determines a man's future—*but everything depends upon the man's will.*

You are not what you *believe.* You are not what you *feel.* You are not what you *do* in a single act. You are what you WILL. You cannot always control your emotion, but you can control your will; and if you are lost, it will not be because your creed is imperfect, or because you are devoid of emotion, but because your will and God's will are in collision; because God wants one thing and you will not have it. He wants you to let Him have His will in you. It is not the willing of your will on God, but it is your being prepared to accept God's will. Hence Jesus said, "How often would I"—and the Greek is a very strong word for the will—"How often would I gather you as a hen gathers her chicks, but"—and the same Greek word is used again—"ye would not!" If any man is a lost soul, let him understand that it is because he said No to God.

Why are you not a Christian? Why have you not accepted His mercy? You say:

"I have my objections to Christianity. I am not quite sure that the Bible is true. I am inclined to think there is a good deal in what Ingersoll used to say. I rather doubt the inspiration of the Bible. I have seen a good deal in church people that makes me think they are hypocrites."

Not one of these is the true reason why you are not a Christian. But God wants something from you that you won't give, and it is your WILL that is at the root of your apparent infidelity. That is, there is some habit of your life to which you cling. There is some way of making money which you don't want to give up. Somewhere in your life there is something which has been fighting the will of God for years. The strength of your will is so strong in its antagonism to God, that if you don't take care you will become a waste product, because God can do nothing for you.

### THE POTTER AND THE CLAY.

The whole conception of that passage is in the potter. The potter is the same everywhere. He takes a piece of clay, and sits before his wheel with his foot upon the treadle, desiring to make a vessel for beauty or for use, for a palace or a kitchen. Here is the clay. The treadle causes the wheel to revolve horizontally. He takes the plastic clay, puts it on the wheel, and as it revolves, with his two hands he begins to make the vessel, shaping it upwards to the lip. But suddenly he comes upon a fault, a bubble, something gritty. He comes back and back to it, but

it won't yield to his touch. He takes all the clay off, and kneads it again into a plastic lump. A second time he begins to build up his conception, and again comes to that flaw; and though he comes back to it two or three times, it won't yield.

What is the man to do? I ask you what would you do? You are anxious to make something, but the clay won't permit you to make it. You are willing with your skill and power to bring the clay to the required shape, but there is something in it that resists you. You take other clay. Ah! this is better! And the first lot is cast away as useless.

God called the Jews to be His chosen people and the missionaries of the world. But He had to put them aside and take the Gentiles instead. Similarly you may be on the very verge of missing the grandest chance of being used for the divinest purposes, because you won't yield yourselves to the will of God, but cling to your own.

I took up a young fellow once and hoped to make a man of him. He bade fair to be a fine man. When he was about eighteen years he fell. I helped him to regain his feet, and said:

"Young fellow, that is between God, you and me. I give you another chance."

He fell a second time, and again I picked him up. I hardly knew what to do about it. I had put money into his education, and it seemed a pity to lose him, so I said:

"I will give you another chance."

He went on for a while, and then he fell a third time. I said:

"I must give you up. I don't say I won't forgive you; of course I will; but I cannot afford to squander more of my time and strength on you."

Are you enjoying evil habits? Are any living in sin? Are you refusing to confess your sin? God by His Spirit strives with you. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." In the night, when the house is still, He says, "Don't do this evil thing that I hate."

You reply, "I must do it."

The voice of God says, "Let me mould you. Let me make you good. Give up your sin."

You say, "I can't"; but you mean, "I won't."

What are you going to do now? Heaven and hell are waiting to learn your decision. God wants to make a saint of you, the devil wants to ruin you. Woe to him that striveth with his Maker! Woe to the man who shoots arrows at the sun! Woe to the man who raises his voice against God! Woe to the man who frustrates and neutralizes God's purpose!

I see a pierced Hand reaching down and resting upon you. I hear a gentle Voice pleading. It seems as though the Spirit of God is bent on making one last effort to impress His will upon you, a will that means only your good. Up to this minute you have refused to take the impression. You say God is too hard on you, His dealings are unjust. That woman asks why she was married to a cruel husband; that man asks why God let him marry so vain a woman. Some boy asks why God let him be born into a family which opposes his being a Christian. In one form or another you fight against God. But yield, yield!

I don't tell you to wait for feeling. I don't ask you to feel resigned. You cannot begin by feelings. But I say, yield! choose! throw up your arms in surrender, and say,

"My God, have your way, and do your will, I will say yes."

Towards the end of the Bible it says they shall say "Amen Hallelujah" (Revelation 19:4). You may depend upon it, that this is in heaven. There are things in our life to which we can't say "Hallelujah" now, but we can say "Amen," and keep on saying it. We get to the beginning of "Hallelujah" sometimes, but it is rare. Ah, we shall sing it out some day, "Amen! Hallelujah!" Meanwhile let us learn to live always and everywhere saying Yes to God. Then, instead of being bits of broken pottery we shall be vessels meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS DISPENSATION.

God made the world in ages. There was the age of creation; the age that culminated in the deluge; the age of Israel; and we are living in the age which commenced on the day of Pentecost, and will close with the second advent of our Lord.

Just as Jesus was born on a definite day which we celebrate as Christmas day, and came into new relations with the world which will never be dissolved, so also on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came into new relations with men.

Just as we date the chronology of the world from the advent of our Lord, so we should date the history of the church from the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, there is a precise parallel, which you will see in a moment. Our Lord was in the world before His birth, but at His birth He took a human body. The Holy Spirit was in the world before the day of Pentecost, but at Pentecost He took on a body. He is now tenanting that body, which is composed of all believers in every age and every clime. As Jesus Christ was literally in the world, so I believe the Holy Spirit is literally present in the church of Christ, and in every gathering of that church. I do not think you can locate the Spirit of God. I do not think you can say there is more of Him here

than there. I believe He is as much in this church today as in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, only our eyes are holden and we have lost the power to see Him.

Our Lord distinctly taught in John 14:20: "In that day (the day of Pentecost), ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Three things are matters of common knowledge—that Jesus is God, that our standing is in Him, and that His life, begun in us now, is to have fruition in the future. In the present age the Holy Ghost reveals Jesus, and Jesus reveals the Father, and I believe there is a further stage in the Christian experience in which the Father reveals Himself. Jesus indicates that at the day of Pentecost a new epoch began.

There are thousands of Christians living on this side of Pentecost, as if that great event had never occurred. They are living on the same plan as the early disciples before they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Historically and chronologically they are on this side, experimentally they are on the other side of Pentecost.

This wonderful age in which we live, therefore, is pre-eminently the age of the Holy Spirit. It is also the age of the formation of the church of Christ. It is the age in which the Spirit of God and the church bear a double witness to Christ. And the Spirit of God is leading the church out into missions.

I need spend no time in showing that the Spirit of God was at work all through the Old Testament.

There are three departments in His work—His work in creation (Gen. 1:3); His work in inspiration (II Pet. 1:21); and His work in quickening elect souls, as when He "clothed Himself with Gideon" (Judges 6:34, R. V. margin), and moved in and through him to the accomplishment of His purposes.

I asked a man once whether there was more electricity in the world today, or in the time of Frederick the Great, or in the Garden of Eden. The man looked very wise, and said of course there was more today than ever before. I said to him:

"There always was as much as there is now. The only difference is that certain persons have discovered the laws by which electricity can be applied."

Now I hope you will understand me when I say that is a precise illustration of what the blessed Jesus has done for us all. The Holy Spirit was in the world before the birth of Christ, but Christ, in His earthly life, revealed the laws of His operation, so that anybody and everybody in the true church may now avail himself of the power of the Holy Spirit, which previously was reserved for an Isaiah or a Daniel, or some other favored person. This was anticipated by Joel, who said that in the last days God would pour out His spirit upon all flesh.

Perhaps you have been in Switzerland, and witnessed what I have seen. I have gone out on the veranda of the hotel at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and looked at the range of mountains that rose before me. At first all is gray and damp and chilly. But as I look, it seems as if God's angel has been stepping from one summit to another, lighting fires

all along his path. Beneath, the mist still hangs over the valley, the clouds roll and tumble in endless confusion.

As I wait and watch, the sun rises. The mists roll up and disappear. By the time the sun reaches the meridian, his rays have poured into every nook and crevice in the valley.

So I think the Holy Ghost before Pentecost struck with living flame only the great mountain peaks among men. That summit was Moses; that, Samson; that, David; that, Jeremiah. But at the day of Pentecost, He who had been given only to the spiritual aristocrats of the race, became the common property of the democracy. "I will pour out of My spirit upon *all flesh*; and your *sons* and your *daughters* shall prophesy, and your *young men* shall see visions, and your *old men* shall dream dreams; and on My *servants* and on My *handmaidens* I will pour out in those days of My Spirit" (Acts 2:17, 18).

### MEN SHOULD ACCEPT THIS POWER.

What folly it would be for a man to say he was not going to avail himself of the uses of electricity, but would go on in the same old way of past centuries! But did you ever think, my friend, that if you are content to live your life without the power which is within your reach, and which God sent to enable you to live better, you are making the same mistake?

You say you want to live like Christ and follow in His steps, and yet you are refusing to make use of the power which He has supplied. You say you

always thought the power of the Holy Ghost was a spasmodic thing that came where people could stand the strain of a whole night in prayer or some other emotional experience. You have thought that you must leave the baptism of the Holy Spirit for people who were differently constituted from yourself. I thought that once. But I found this text in Romans 8:2: "The law of the Spirit of Life." We know enough about Edison to know that he is not a man who works himself up to a high pitch of nervous excitement before he completes a discovery. He simply obeys certain laws. The law of the Spirit of life is for anybody and everybody who will obey. If a man is clean and pure in heart and lives near God, he can always count on the operation of the Spirit of God. In your home you touch a spring or turn a key and the whole room is filled with light. Just as surely you can be filled with the light of the Spirit of life if you will obey the law.

### CHRIST'S BAPTISM.

When our Saviour was on earth, He lived for thirty years in Nazareth, and He was taught the laws of the Spirit. He waited until the moment came for Him to be endued and anointed with the Spirit. He went to the Jordan and was baptized. In His baptism He identified Himself with the sins of man. He rose from the water as an obedient child of God, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested upon Him. He went to the wilderness and was tempted. He came back,

and stood in the synagogue, and said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, and He hath anointed Me to preach." The blessed Saviour would not begin to help a dying, broken-hearted world until He was sure He had the power of the Spirit of God.

Before He left this world He said: "I will pray the Father and He will send you another Comforter." When Jesus Christ received the Spirit, He received Him for His church, and for you and me.

He gave Him to His church, to be its permanent possession during the present age; and He waits to give each individual member of that church his or her share in Pentecost, on the one condition of applying for it by faith. As you took forgiveness from the hand of the dying Christ, take your share of the Pentecostal gift from the hand of the living Christ.

Don't think that blessed gift is only for elect men and for special work. I want you to understand the fullness of the Spirit is for every believer, to make you the men and women you want to be. The failure of your life that you complain of is that you are trying to attain the ideal without the power which alone makes the ideal possible.

The blessing of the day of Pentecost is always described as being "filled" with the Holy Spirit. God's will for believers is that they should be filled, women as well as men. As full as the tree is of sap when it rises from the roots and fills the furthermost branches, so we are to be filled with the Spirit until Christian fruitfulness is as natural to us as the flower and fruit to the tree. We may be as full of

the Spirit as the tree is of sap, as the body is of life, as the mind is full of thought, as the heart is full of love, as the cold, dull iron is filled with the white flame of the furnace.

When we are living in the power of the Spirit our old sins will have no part in us because we are filled with something better. This is the true idea of becoming holy.

Some people say that you must give up this and that and the other, until the soul is bewildered. Let the love of God come in, let the purity of Christ fill you, and then the evil thought, the unholy word which have been the curse of your life, will naturally drop off. Just as the sap in the tree forces off the dead leaves in the spring, so if we are filled with the Spirit of God, the things which have cursed our lives will drop off naturally. It is God's ideal.

### REGENERATING AND FILLING.

You have known the Holy Ghost regenerating and quickening and blessing you. But have you known Him infilling you with His mighty presence and power?

I am prepared to admit that this *should* be the experience of the young convert, and might if he were properly instructed.

I remember reading the story of a young fellow named Joseph, who belonged to one of your American cities. He was of a wild and evil disposition, the trial and torment of the local ministers, who gave orders that he must not be admitted to their churches on God's day. A camp meeting was held near by.

The third day Joseph was powerfully convicted of sin, and went forward and knelt at the penitents' form. An old lady, who was watching him, also went forward and knelt at his side. After several hours of agonizing prayer Joseph came into the full light of God.

The lady asked him to call at her house on his way home that she might give him a tract called "Counsel to Young Converts." By mistake, however, she gave him a tract on the filling of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph read it. He saw that the attitude of heart by which he received pardon was the attitude by which he could now receive all that Christ had further to bestow. He immediately entered into a joyous consciousness of the risen Christ; because when the soul is filled with the Holy Ghost, it is conscious, not of Him, but of Christ, whose face He reveals.

If you, friend, are unsaved and unregenerate up to this moment, in the name of Jesus I bid you look to Him! Not to the cross, but to Him who hung there! Not to the grave, but to Him who passed through it, and rose again! Not to the Bible, but to Him of whom it testifies! Not to the Holy Spirit, but to Him whom He glorifies! The moment you do so in faith, you are saved!

The Spirit of God came suddenly upon the church at Pentecost. He came suddenly upon the church at Samaria. He came suddenly upon Cornelius in Acts X. I believe, therefore, that the soul may suddenly receive and apprehend the great power of

the Holy Spirit. You can be filled a drop at a time, just as you can fill a well with water a drop at a time, or by turning a stream into it.

### FIVE TESTS.

There are just *five tests* by which you may know that you have received this infilling. Let me give them to you.

### A LIVING CHRIST.

1. Is the Lord Jesus Christ a living reality to you? (John 16:13, 14.) How do you look at Jesus Christ?

A great many Christians look at Christ away back on the cross nineteen hundred years ago, but they have no perception of Christ as a living presence with them day by day. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit he does not talk much about the Spirit, but about Christ, because the whole aim of the Holy Spirit is to shed light upon Jesus. The people who talk about the Holy Ghost as if He were their Lord make a profound mistake. The Spirit does not glorify Himself or reveal Himself, but reveals Jesus; and hence the person who is most filled with the Spirit talks most about Jesus Christ as a living personality in his experience.

A striking episode took place in the life of Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, England, one Eastertide. As he was preparing his Easter sermon, it seemed as if Jesus glided into his study. His presence was so manifest to his heart that he said:

"Jesus is really alive! Jesus is really here! My people shall know that Jesus is really here!"

Ever since then, at Carr's Lane Chapel they sing an Easter hymn every Sabbath morning to remind them that Christ is really present.

Have you had an experience like that? Business man in your counting house, mother in your home, young man in your study, have you said to yourself: "Jesus is here! Jesus is alive!"

You may know it; and if you do not, you are not filled with the Holy Ghost.

ASSURANCE.

2. Have you assurance that you are a child of God?

There are many in our churches who dare not say with Paul, "I KNOW whom I have believed." They are dishonoring God by not believing His Word. If you are filled with His Spirit, He will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Romans 8:16).

You may be a Christian without knowing it. If I save a person from drowning, the doctor may come and say, "Yes, that life is saved," but the person may be unconscious of it for two hours or more. So you may be a Christian, and the consciousness of your salvation may not come for a day or a month or a year. But directly you receive the Spirit of God, you will know you are saved. Even though you have no emotional enjoyment, you know you are saved. There is a deeper consciousness which the presence or absence of emotion does not affect.

When I come to my house at night, my little child comes running to meet me, knowing that I have candy for her in my pocket. To test her affection, I

leave off the candy and come without it. She meets me just the same, and I say:

"My child, I have no candy for you."

She replies: "Father, I don't come for the candy, I come for you."

I drop the candy to see if the child really cares for me, and so God drops the happy feelings to see if we really care for Him, for Himself. But apart from feelings, there is a clear consciousness of God as our Father.

VICTORY OVER KNOWN SIN.

3. Have you victory over known sin? (Galatians 5:16-22.) "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

I do not ask if you are sinless—you cannot be that in this life. A girl dusted a room in the early winter morning and did her best. At noon her mistress called her in and asked:

"Did you dust this room today?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, look at all the dust!"

"Well, ma'am, the light was dim this morning, and it looks different in the sunlight!"

So I am not asking if you are free from sin up to God's standard, which includes sins of omission as well as sins of commission; but are you kept from known sin up to the light God has given you? If you are being constantly overcome you are not filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is like an antiseptic to impure thoughts, and unclean desires, and things which are selfish and worldly and abominable. I wish you to

understand that the Christian life does not consist in avoiding this or that, but in being so saturated with something better that you have no desire for these sinful things. Some have only enough religion to make them miserable. The child which has had a good meal does not want the bones over which the dogs are fighting in the street. When you are perfectly satisfied and filled, you are delivered from the opposite. If you are full of the Spirit, you are delivered from the power of sin. You will be kept full of Jesus and holy desires, and the epidemic of sin will have no fascination over you.

Christian man, you say you can't do without whiskey? Young fellow, you say you can't get rid of that bad habit? Young girl, you say you can't get the better of jealousy and gossip? Tell me, would God give us an ideal and leave us to wallow in the marsh of our own helplessness and impurity? No! Jesus Christ is not a theory, but a living power in one's life. You can be delivered from the claims of sin.

### POWER IN WITNESS-BEARING.

4. Have you power in witness-bearing? (Acts 1:8.)

Can you speak to others for God? If you are with a man who swears, can you stop him? Do you feel it an effort or natural? If you feel it an effort, you have not got what I am talking about. If you have, you will find it natural and easy.

I believe it is just the overflowing of our hearts

which does people good. The forced, mechanical effort of our mind does not amount to much. It is not difficult for the bird to sing, for the child to laugh, and it should not be difficult for you to speak for Jesus. If you are living in Christ, and Christ lives in you, the living waters ought to spring up and overflow.

5. Have you the spirit of holy love (Acts 2:45-47)? This I need not dwell on.

Is Jesus real to you? Have you assurance of sonship? Do you have the victory over your flesh? Are you able to bear witness as the early disciples did? Are you filled with the spirit of love? If not, there are three steps necessary—confession, surrender and faith.

CONFESSION.

Before God can come into your soul there will have to be a setting right of things which are not as they should be. I have gone through it all myself. There were things in my heart years ago that choked out all of God's fullness. As I knelt before God, there was one thing in my life about which God seemed to say:

"As long as that thing is permitted in your life, I cannot give you the fulness of the Spirit's indwelling."

It was an awful fight, because I liked it, and thought I could not live without it. But, do you know, as I look back at that thing now, I think what a fool I was to nearly lose all for that which I now

hate; for the minute you give up a wrong thing, you begin to hate it.

Perhaps it is the habit of excessive smoking which some of you men have. It may be some of you women use morphine. Perhaps in your business you are doing things which are not strictly right. If you are doing anything which your conscience condemns, you cannot have God's best. If you cannot give it up yourself, then say to God:

"I am not willing to give it up, but I am willing to be made willing."

### SURRENDER.

Then comes *Surrender.* You must be prepared to take the second step, and say:

"I yield myself wholly to Thee, my Lord and Saviour. I place myself on the altar. I abandon myself entirely and absolutely to Thy will and service."

### FAITH.

Then follows *Faith.* Gal. 3:14 tells us that we may receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by faith, just as we receive forgiveness, or any other spiritual gift. You may not have the immediate gush of blessed emotion, but you must go on reckoning that you have received, because you have fulfilled God's conditions. Dare to start on your way home, sure that you have received, if you have complied with God's conditions. Then seek the filling again and again, whenever the power of the Spirit waxes low in your soul.

There are five steps which you must take. They are as follows:

1. There is such a blessing as the filling of the Holy Spirit.

2. It is for me. Jesus obtained it when He ascended on high, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious.

3. I have not got it.

4. I am willing to make any sacrifice that is necessary to receive it.

5. I open my heart now to receive it.

Take those steps, and go forth to live a real life. Don't talk about the filling. *Live it!* Go forth to shine, and speak, and love, and suffer (if need be), in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is nothing arbitrary or capricious in God's dealings with the soul. If one man has more of God than another, it is simply because he has learned the holy art of taking more of God into his life. On the same stream one man may get more water power to drive his engine than another, not because there is any arbitrariness in the water, but because the one man has learned how to utilize the water power better than the other. The same mighty power of God is flowing by every one of us, and if you would have the most power in your own life and work, you have simply to comply most absolutely with the conditions on which God gives Himself to you.

I am thankful to say that those conditions are not conditions of emotion, but that, irrespective of your emotional temperament, you may come into intimate and powerful relationship with the eternal God, who works according to law. All you have to do is to bring yourself into such an attitude towards God that you may receive from Him everything that He has to give the human soul. Most men think that they must receive God's gifts through some man's ministry. They are living on God at second—or third—hand. There is no reason why you should not live at first-hand.

The Lord had said that His disciples must forgive seven times a day if necessary. The disciples re-

plied: "You are expecting too much; but if it ought to be done you must give us much more faith."

Christ said: "You make a great mistake; you do not need more faith. Use the faith you have, though it be no larger than the smallest seed. If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." Luke 17:5, 6.

It is not the *quantity* of faith, but the *quality,* which is important. A grain of mustard seed and a pellet of dust may appear at a distance to be much the same, but the difference between the two is immense, because the one has no life burning at the heart of it, whilst the other contains life as God has kindled it. The one thing that you need is to have faith, as small as you like, but faith which has in it the principle of life, namely, faith with God in it. That is enough to remove mountains of difficulty, and to uproot sycamine trees and plant them in the sea. That will be sufficient.

The one thing that shows whether or not your faith is of the right quality is whether it is directed towards the right object, which is Jesus Christ. If your faith be infinitesimal, if it be full of changeful emotion, if it be groping in the dark, if it be unable to see closely the face of Christ, if for long months you have no conscious enjoyment of the presence of Christ, yet, if your faith is reaching out its trembling hands towards Christ, that movement

proves your faith to be the faith that binds you to Christ, and you are a child of God.

People say that it is presumptuous to say that you are saved. But is it presumptuous to say that God is true? And if God says that the soul which believes in Christ has eternal life, is it not presumptuous on your part to say that you have not, and refuse to say you have if you believe? That would make God a liar. If you want to affirm that God is true, then dare to say:

"I am a sinful lost man by nature, but I simply trust in Jesus Christ. Therefore I dare to say that I have the eternal life that God has promised."

The object of faith, therefore, is not the Bible, but the Christ of whom the Bible speaks; not the creed, but the Christ of whom the creed is true; not the cross, but the Christ who died on it and lives forevermore.

If today, with much ignorance and imperfection, you are holding to the living Christ, the faith that you have towards Him will save you, and I would rather have a little faith in the right object than have any amount of faith in the wrong object. If a man holds with one hand a life buoy, it will save him; whereas he might hold a block of iron with both hands and he would drown. I have met a good many people in the world who talk about their great faith, and they have had great faith in their great faith; but it is a better thing to have a little faith in Christ than to have a great faith in your great faith. A great many are always looking at their faith until they can see nothing else, like a girl

when she is first in love—she is always looking at her love and wondering whether it is good enough for her lover, and the more she thinks about it the less she thinks she has. The only way to make her love grow is not to think about it, but to think about the person she loves. The man who is always muffling up his throat will catch cold. The man who is always wondering whether he is ill or not will make himself ill. And the man who is always worrying about his faith will have no faith left to worry about. The only hope for the soul is to look at Christ.

But Christ says, Faith as a grain of mustard seed can move mountains and trees. What did He mean?

The mustard seed grows to a height of some twenty feet, almost a tree. There lies the tiny seed, saying:

"I cannot. I am sure I can never produce a growth of twenty feet."

Ah, wait! Thou wilt say something else presently. Away there is rich, deep soil saying to itself:

"O that I had some means by which to give vent to my slumbering strength, but I have no opportunity of pouring it forth."

Ah! if we could only bring these two together: this tiny seed that sighs its inability, and that soil that is conscious of all ability. If only that seed may abide in that soil, and that soil may pour itself through the tiny aperture of that seed, it will bear much fruit, it will realize its furthest possibilities.

Your faith is like the tiny grain. You think you

will never be able to produce a holy and useful life. But the great God is there, nearer than words can tell, and if only your soul can come into living union with the eternal God, there is nothing that He will not be able to effect by your instrumentality.

There are five processes. First, there must be contact; second, solitude; third, death; fourth, reception; and fifth, individuality.

CONTACT.

First, *there must be contact.*

As long as that seed is isolated from the soil—in the barn, on the shelf, or in the sack—it abides by itself alone. Only when it is brought into contact with the soil can there be any fruit. And as long as your life is apart from God, as long as you are trying to justify yourself, to sanctify yourself, or to work for God, the true fruit of your life is impossible.

I do not say you are not a good man, or that you are not trying to do good, but you have not learned yet that apart from God you can do nothing; that all the fussy activity of your life—running hither and thither, putting out startling advertisements of sermons, preaching brilliant essays, organizing your church—shuts God out and amounts to nothing. It fills the newspapers, it attracts the attention of men; but it is of wood, hay or stubble, for the only thing which is permanent in a man's life is that of God which goes into it. As long as you are apart from God, though trying to serve God in a strange anomaly, you are missing the true power of your life.

There must be more than ever contact between your soul and God—a perpetual and unbroken contact, the life hidden—hidden with Christ in God, as the seed is hidden in the soil.

Get out of sight! This perpetual publicity, this living for the eye of man, this trying to please men, there is too much of you in it all. Be buried in the soil, and there will be some chance that you will do work which will live.

SOLITUDE.

Second, *there must be solitude.* The little seed falls in to the earth to be wholly isolated from its companions, lying there month after month beneath the envelope of frost and snow. In silence and solitude it waits.

This comes to a man very often in a sick chamber, or when people turn against him. How many a man or woman has felt this sense of loneliness with God! Sometimes the church has turned from its pastor, and acquaintance or friend has looked shyly upon the soul which has given itself up to God. The little seed drops alone into its tiny grave, and lies in contact with the soil; and so the soul full often, being stripped of every human help and comfort, is brought face to face for the first time in its life with God in Christ, and the one deep thought of the soul is that henceforth God shall fill its vision, and be its Alpha and Omega. When God is all in all, there is the promise of marvelous results.

DEATH.

Third, *there must be death.*

Every tree grows out of a grave, and every stalk

of wheat springs from a grave. When you walk over the autumn fields you are walking over a graveyard. Beneath your feet hundreds of tiny grains lie entombed. It might seem as if the grain has sacrificed its power to bless men with bread by lying there in a lonely grave of isolation and seclusion, while the very heart of it is being torn out of it by the insidious work of death and corruption. Ah, that is so often the necessary step and condition of the coming harvest! Sometimes God takes a man into the chamber of death where he sees his little child or beloved wife fading from him. Sometimes He strips a man of his reliance upon his rhetorical eloquence, upon his brilliant gifts, or upon all those habits and associations and reinforcements in his own life upon which he had been accustomed to rely, and he has to die to all.

The story is told of Tauler, the great preacher, that before the days of Luther he filled the cathedral at Strasburg with an enthusiastic audience. Across the hills there came Nicholas, a simple Swiss, who was deeply versed in the Word of God. He said to him:

"I want to confess to you."

While listening to the confession of the peasant, Tauler found himself confessing—confessing that after all his life had been a failure. Through the peasant he heard the voice of God saying to him:

"Tauler, great preacher, thou must die; thou must die before thou canst truly bear fruit."

He tore himself away and went alone for a year into his monastery cell, and there God stripped him

of his reliance upon his eloquence and brilliance, and upon his force and power as a man.

At the end of twelve months he came out of that cell and stood again in his pulpit. The church was crowded with the elite of the city. But half way through the sermon he broke utterly down, and the congregation dispersed, saying:

"Ah, our great preacher is spoiled."

A week after he began to speak to a few humble people that gathered still in the church, and to pour out the sermons which are still blessing hundreds and thousands of readers.

In the early part of our life we feel strong, and say that we will prevail by our thinking, our learning, our eloquence, that we are going to carry the world before us; but there comes a time in life when we find that all that doesn't really count, and we bow down before God, saying: "Lord God, I have done with it." That moment we lay hold upon resources of divine power that begin to flood our lives. The minister may no longer produce brilliant sermons, but he gives messages—he no longer works for God, but God works through him. That is death to self.

### RECEPTIVITY.

The fourth stage is very beautiful—*receptivity.*

Away down in its little grave, as the spring comes, there is a gentle knock at the door of the little seed, which has torn its waterproof coat. It is the knock of Mother Nature, which is God. She says:

"May I come in?"

The seed, from within, cries: "I have nothing

to give thee. I am broken, helpless, torn, and at the end of myself."

But Mother Nature says, "May I come in?"

"Thou canst if thou wilt."

The door is opened, and Mother Nature pours a tiny, trickling stream of her wonderful energy into the perforated, lacerated, broken mustard seed; and the pulse of life is felt within, forcing down the rootlet into the soil, and forcing up a green spire which makes its way through the heavy clay that conceals it, until at last the little green shoot raises its head above the surface of the field, and looks around and says:

"Perhaps I can after all! If Mother Nature goes on pouring her energy into me, there is nothing that I can't do."

So the root gets deeper, and the spire grows higher. It is not the seed; it is Mother Nature in the seed. It is not you, but God in you. It is no longer the fussy, active, restless running hither and thither, imitating this man or that, and searching for all the brilliant things that other people have said and then linking them together into one patchwork and holding up before your people, like Joseph's coat of many colors; but it is God who speaks through you. God is working in you to will and to do His good pleasure, and you working out all the good works that God works in, and energizing, according to the working of Him that energizeth within you mightily.

If you apprehend it, this truth may revolutionize your life as it did mine; because there will never

more be anything impossible to you. A mountain in front of you does not matter if God works through you; it is moved into the sea. There is simply nothing impossible to the man who has learned the art of being a channel for God.

### INDIVIDUALITY.

The fifth point is *individuality.*

The mustard seed produces mustard growth; the grain of wheat, wheat growth; the acorn, oak growth. George Müller lets God into his soul, and Ashley Down is covered with orphan houses. Spurgeon lets God into his soul, and you have the Tabernacle, and volumes of sermons, and the orphan house, and Pastors' College. Moody lets God into his soul, and Northfield and Chicago, books distributed through the world, hundreds and thousands of souls won for God, are the result of a life that towers over the continents.

### CO-OPERATION WITH CHRIST.

Did you ever notice that there is scarcely a miracle that Jesus did apart from somebody's faith? Christ on earth always needed the seed of somebody's faith through which to produce the growth of miracle. You think the eleventh of John is the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, but I am not sure. I think it is the story of the resurrection of Martha. The Lord Jesus comes to Bethany and finds Lazarus is dead. He must have sympathizing faith through which to work, as a pivot for Him to work on. The disciples are no good, they are too panic stricken. Mary is at home in the house. So He sets to work

on Martha, and is going to discover her nature. Faith lives on promises, so Christ put in the promise:

"Your brother shall rise again."

"Oh, yes," says Martha, "of course he will rise at the last day!"

That is what we are always doing—we think that wonderful things happen before we are born and after we are dead; that heaven touches the earth at the horizon, but is so far above us where we stand. But Christ says to Martha:

"Talk about the last day! Wait for the last day! I AM the resurrection!"

Martha had to think about that for a time.

After a while they got to the grave. Christ must have sympathizing faith to work with, and so He said:

"Martha, didn't I tell you that *if you believed* you would see the glory of God?"

I suppose she answered Him with a gleam of returning faith, and as soon as He saw that He was able to use her, working with her as His collaborator, so to speak, and Lazarus came forth.

Think no more about your faith, but about Christ. Be quiet before God. Open your whole soul to Him that He may sweep through your life, and work through you. Everything in life depends on whether we work for God, or allow God to work through us. Yield then your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Keep your will adjusted with God's will, and your heart open to Him, and expect God to work through you for the removal of mountains or sycamine trees.

## LIFE A POEM.

Man has but one life to live, and each must be desirous that that life should tell to the very uttermost for God and for humanity. In Ephesians 2:10 we find words which will help us as long as we live:

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

The word "created" in the Greek is "poem." We are God's poems. I suppose that each life is a definite thought of God. He has incarnated one original idea in each of us. As no poet repeats himself, but puts a distinct thought in each ode or poem, so God never repeats Himself in any human life. He breaks the mold as soon as He completes His work. Let us remember, therefore, to be original. I lost ten of the best years of my life by trying to imitate other people. Although we may all derive help from the study of biography and from friendship, yet we must always be going back to God to know what He means for us, and then ask Him to work out in our lives His thought to the very highest possibility.

Are you prepared to accept this, and to yield yourself to God day by day that He may accomplish through you the full purpose of His will, and

give a listening world His poem of power or purity or love?

This epistle to the Ephesians is the epistle of "Inness." That is, it is the epistle in which from first to last Paul uses the little preposition "in," and tells us what we are in Christ Jesus. Just as this whole creation slept in the mind of God to be elaborated step by step to its consummation, so the whole church of Jesus Christ lay in the mind of God before the mountains were brought forth or ever He had formed the earth. And you and I were appointed to a definite place in that wonderful body. What that place was will not be made fully clear to us until we stand before God in the eternal light, but it is comforting to know that there was a definite place in the purpose of God for you and me.

Doesn't that give a new meaning and dignity to your life, that it is the working out of the conception of God, and that every day you must try so to walk as to realize the purpose which was in the mind of God when He created you in Christ Jesus? As one looks out upon men and women and things, life seems so full of commonplaces and little anxieties, worries, troubles and misfortunes that one is apt to get into the way of supposing it does not matter very much how he lives. But if we remember that there is an eternal purpose in Christ in our regeneration, we shall always try to act worthily of our high calling in Christ Jesus.

The greatest thing you can do in this world is to live a saintly, holy, lovely life. All the small things of your life, the worries, anxieties, the troubles,

your location and environment, the lines you are compelled to follow—all these have been contrived by God to give you the best opportunity possible to become what He wants you to be. God could have made you anything He liked. He could have made that woman a queen; He could have made that man a millionaire or a prince. But out of all the myriad opportunities of this world God Almighty chose for you just that position in which you find yourself today because He knew that was the one place in which you could come nearest His ideal. It may be there is some awful sorrow in your life. It may be some one is wearing you away by constant, tiresome worry and trial. But always bear in mind that nothing is so small as not to have been contrived by God to make you as much His ideal as it is possible.

Now face your life. You have been fretting, murmuring, envying and longing to be free; overlooking the beautiful things because of two or three miserable ones. You have not heeded what would elevate and comfort you because you are so oppressed with what hurts you. That is not the true way to live; but every day to learn your lesson, and every day to bring your will to the will of God, that your will and His may coincide.

### GOD'S PERMISSION.

But some one says, "I am quite prepared to admit that my present position is in general the result of God's choice, but not that the troubles and worries that come to my life from other people are

God's choice. I draw a distinction between what God directly appoints and what comes to me through the intervention of other men and women."

I used to make that distinction once, but could find no rest while I did. Besides, I saw that you and I are enveloped in the care of God. Supposing a man out yonder shoots a poisoned arrow at me, in some newspaper article, or caustic remark, and it comes winging its way toward me. God Almighty might ward that arrow off by the shield of His protection. But supposing He lowers the shield and lets it reach my heart, has it not become His will for me? I therefore go through the world daring to believe that not one thing, however minute, occurs to me without being God's chisel chipping away a little more of myself and producing a more perfect likeness to the conception which was in His mind for me.

### PARABLE OF THE BLACKBERRY BUSH.

Last summer I was in Luther's country, and I took a trip through the pine forests. I do love the pine forests of Germany, so absolutely quiet, with their colonnades of trees like the colonnades of a temple. About noon I was extremely tired and exhausted, and coming out from the forest to the fringe of it I found a blackberry bush full of the choicest, richest, most enjoyable blackberries—I think I never tasted blackberries that were so luscious. Within ten minutes I had rifled that bush of all its produce. I was quite ashamed of myself, and said:

"I am sorry to have treated you in this way."

But the bush said: "You need not be sorry, I have been waiting for you to come for the last three or four months. I was created for this. It is very lonely here, and I have kept vigil all through the winter storms and the long, dark nights until the spring came, when I began to prepare this banquet for you. I have had such pride in getting ready the basket of fruit that you have enjoyed. Now that you are satisfied, my year's work has received its crown."

I thanked the bush, and said: "Good-by. If I come again next year will you have another feast ready for me?"

"Yes," said the bush.

And I answered: "You remind me of many a lonely saint of God, who through the long months of pain and suffering is preparing a basket of fruit, of which, if no earthly saint partakes, the Master Himself will eat."

That is what I mean by being just where God wants us to be; willing to stay at the stake without being bound because God has put us there, to keep standing quietly at our post amid pain and suffering, preparing baskets of fruit of which Jesus and our fellow believers may partake. Providing the fruits of a holy life in this world is fulfilling Christ's purpose for your life.

WALK IN THEM.

"Created in Jesus Christ, unto good works, which God before prepared THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM." You have not got to create your path, but

to find it—not to cut your way through the tangled undergrowth, but to discover the path which your heavenly Father has prepared for you from the moment you first gave yourself to Jesus to the moment when you will be welcomed home. Never forget that you have been created for a prepared path. God, who knew exactly what was in the path, created you for the path and the path for you, and your life is simply the discovery of God's prepared path for that day. It may lie over greensward or down the steep incline; it may be lonely and solitary or through the busy populace; but your path, beloved friend, has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world, by the wisdom and love of God.

There are two things, therefore, which are necessary for all of us. The first is to know the path, and the second is strength to walk in it. I want to speak a little on those two.

GUIDANCE.

First, how may I know which is my prepared path, either for a day or for my life?

Heb. viii, 11 gives you a never-to-be-forgotten challenge, which (in point of fact) is repeated four times in the Bible—and when the Bible says one thing four times you may depend upon it it is well worth your notice: "They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Preceding the ac-

count of the new covenant, you have God's word to Moses: "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown thee on the mount." Be still before God. In that silence your own restlessness, your own energy, the activity of your flesh will die down. You will put aside a good deal of what you originate, and you will learn to see God's plan and pattern, which will probably be a very different thing to that of your own invention. Be in prayer, open your heart to God, and presently the pattern of the tabernacle, with every letter and tassel and hanging, will appear before you, and then you will go down into the vales beneath to produce what God hath revealed.

And remember when God commands He provides the stuff. He never gave any plans to Moses for which provision was not made. If Moses had put in one thing extra he would have had to have a collection for it; but as long as he worked on God's pattern, God was responsible for the provision of the material.

Let me just indicate how you may know the path of God's will.

When I was crossing the Irish channel one dark, starless night I stood on the deck by the captain and asked him:

"How do you know Holyhead harbor on so dark a night as this?"

He said: "You see those three lights? Those three must line up behind each other as one, and when we see them so united we know the exact position of the harbor mouth."

When we want to know God's will there are three things which always concur—the inward impulse, the Word of God and the trend of circumstances. God in the heart, impelling you forward; God in His Book, corroborating whatever He says in the heart; and God in circumstances, which are always indicative of His will. Never start until these three things agree.

You may have an inward impulse to be a minister, young man, but you have that invalid mother to support. Therefore the trend of circumstances and the inward impulse do not tally, and you must wait. If you do not know what to do next, stand still until you do. If God has not indicated the path beyond a certain point, remain quiet until He does. Throw the responsibility back on God.

There is a remarkable illustration in Acts xii:12, of the way in which God leaves us to the action of our judgment, when our judgment is enough. Peter was in prison. He could not emerge, and the angel therefore came to him and led him out, the gate opening of its own accord. (You will always find that the gates will open of their own accord if you are in the company of God's angels.

The angel then took Peter through two streets, because he was so dazed he thought he was dreaming. But when the night air had revived him the angel left him. "And when he had considered the thing he came to the house" of John Mark. You see the angel was there when he was dazed, but when he woke up the angel said:

"Now, Peter, you have your senses. You can

find your own way without me, and so I will leave you."

God will lead you by your own judgment, and when judgment is enough, don't expect a miracle, for God uses His miracles sparingly. —

GOD'S STUPID CHILDREN.

The more stupid you are to understand the more you must rely on God. I think stupid people really get on the best with God if they are content to be stupid and not seem wise. Thomas was so dull—he lived a week behind the other apostles; but you know how eager Jesus was to explain to Thomas the mystery of His resurrection, and came specially to help him.

If I had in my family three or four children who were really bright and one who was stupid and obtuse in his intellect, and I told the children that on a Saturday afternoon I would go with them to the woods to gather the spring flowers if they would meet me at a certain place—perhaps I might find the little fellow's face still dull and cloudy because he could not understand my meaning. Would I let him miss the treat when he needed it so much more than the others? Am I going to punish him for his stupidity, which may in some part be attributable to me? No, I take him on my knee and explain it to him again. If still he does not understand, I say to him:

"Wait right here, and after dinner I will take you with me."

So the stupid child gets more of my kind and

loving help than the others who have gone on and are ready to meet me at the appointed place.

If you are one of God's stupid children who cannot catch His meaning, stand still until God takes you by the hand and says: "Come along with Me." God is bound to make you know.

When you have asked God to guide your judgment, and have thought it well out and acted as you thought the wisest, seeking His will and moving forward, suppose you find yourself in some great difficulty? That does not prove that you have made a mistake, or that you are not in God's path. It simply proves that any other path would have been impassable. There is a way under the difficulty, or around or above it, and presently it will be made passable. Whenever you decide on a course, trusting God and asking Him to block you if you are wrong, go on; for if it were not His path for you He would have told you. Dare to go on.

### KEEPING.

When you know what your path is, you must learn to appropriate the power which is within your reach to walk in it. For these "good works" there is a sufficiency in Jesus Christ, in whom we were created. For every good work there is a counterpart of grace in Christ. The pain, the sorrow, the worry are all pre-determined, and the grace for them all is in Christ. And further, the special form of trial was intended to compel you to take from Christ what otherwise you would have missed.

Blind men were permitted to come to Christ to show that there was eye-salve in Him; deaf and dumb men were permitted to come to elicit hearing and speech; dead men were brought to Christ for all the world to know the life that was in Christ. As I understand it, even sin can bring out qualities in God which otherwise would never have been realized.

Up to now you have probably been looking at some trial in your life with a great deal of anxiety, and you have been trying to cope with it and have been mastered by it, perpetually beaten down to the ground. That is only because Jesus wants to show you what He can do.

In Ireland a friend of mine once went to call on what we call a decayed Irish nobleman; that is, he had seen better days. He had a title, and was nominally the owner of a large tract of country. My friend passed in the gateway and proceeded up to the old ancestral house, but on reaching it he found there was only a housekeeper there. It was a lovely place, but she said that her master, the nobleman, might be found at the gate lodge which he had passed. My friend found that he was stricken with a strange disease, which led him to think that he had no money at all, and in order to economize he deserted his magnificent home, which he could well keep up, and live in the lodge.

It was a queer thing to do, wasn't it? But it is what you have been doing all your life. God meant you to live a royal life, and He put into

Jesus Christ everything to enable you to live that life. You have seen the plan, and you have not dared to realize it because you thought you had not capital enough, whereas in Jesus Christ God has put the fullness of His possession. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ," Ephesians 1:3. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," Colossians 2:9. "His divine power hath given unto us all things," 2 Peter 1:3.

If ever God puts me forward to new responsibility I always go back to Him on an honorable understanding that He will give me more of His help.

You probably understand intellectually what I am saying, but have you never learned the art of TAKING from Christ? If I were to say to you, "Stop praying; you have prayed enough; give up praying and take," would you understand what I meant? You have been praying to God as though you had to wring it from Him with the greatest difficulty. When you have prayed for a thing, take it! At the end of your prayer, stop still and take!

"Believe that ye receive, and ye shall have" (Mark 11:24). When you have definitely and reverently believed on a promise go away and reckon that, whether you feel it or not, you have received.

All these things will be taught you one by one if you will only present yourself to God. Give Him your mind, that He may think into you His thoughts. Give Him your heart, that no love may be there

but His own and such love as He permits. Give Him your hands, your body, the whole of your life, that through it He may fulfill His own will. Then keep looking up to Him and receive from Him that which you need.

That is, as far as I know, the secret of living well. May God teach you further and help you to give up all to Him!

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